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Becoming middle class:

Kinship, personhood, and social mobility
in the central Philippines

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PhD Social Anthropology
The University of Edinburgh
April 2017

Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis is an intimate portrait of kinship, personhood, and social mobility in the central Philippines. Through the story of a sibling set that came of age after the Second World War, their kin, and neighbours, it explores why and how upward mobility was aspired for, its consequences, and the ways in which such an achievement are recalled and narrated. The chapters examine the manifold and, at times, contradictory emotions that surrounded journeys of social mobility, whilst historicising the very selves and relations within which such narratives and emotions become embedded.

Central to this account is siblingship, as viewed from later life, and in relation to filiation, the pursuit of personal autonomy through gendered educational and professional fields, and marriage and family formation. Although expectations of solidarity and life-long, and even transgenerational, support saturated ties of siblingship, conflicts between siblings were also deemed unsurprising, especially in adulthood, after marriage, and most especially, after the death of their parents.

Whilst solidarity amongst siblings was seen as fundamental to achieving middle-classness, the pursuit of upward mobility in some cases heightened the potential for hierarchy, inequality, gendered differences, and enmity implied by siblingship, whilst mitigating and reversing it in others. Upward mobility had implications too for the succeeding generation, as conflicts and unequal life chances were passed on by parents to their children, sibling set sizes became smaller, and cousins became geographically distant from one another.

Rooted in the anthropology of Southeast Asia and the Philippines, this thesis speaks to broader concerns about how kinship and personhood unfold and are transformed over time, how persons and their relations reflect, absorb, and refract broader societal shifts, and how seemingly ordinary, intimate, and private aspects of life have wider reverberations.

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Note on Orthography

At present, Philippine languages, including Hiligaynon, do not use diacritical marks. However, to make it easier for non-Filipinos to read local terms, I have opted to use diacritics, but only with vowels, and except for penultimate syllables, which are stressed in most Hiligaynon words. In using Hiligaynon words, I consulted Kauffman's (1900) dictionary for spelling. Unless otherwise noted, italicised words are in Hiligaynon. Finally, when quoting from old dictionaries and other documents, I have preserved their authors' spelling.

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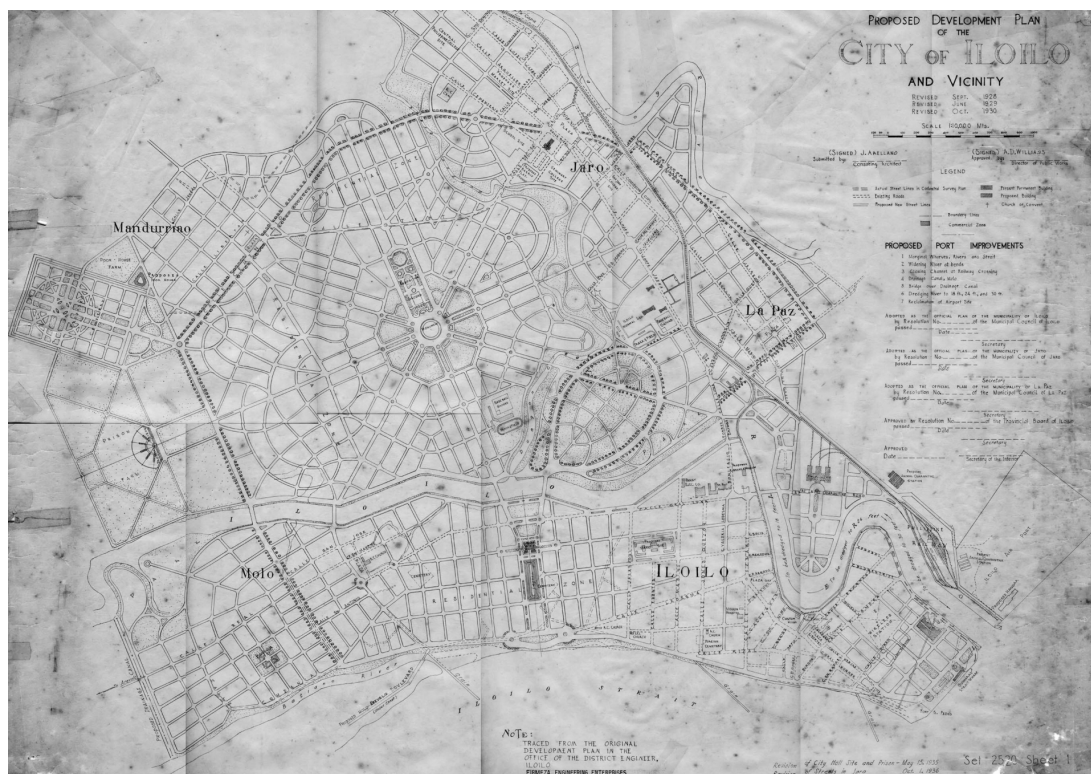


Figure 1. The Arellano Plan of 1936 (courtesy of Nereo Cajilig Luján)

Introduction

'All that's sweet becomes bitter'

*Lumalabáy nga daw asó, asó pa lamang
Ang mga butáng nga tanan sa kalibutan
Ang mga matam-is, aháy!, nagapa-ít lang, aháy!
Sa gihapon, aháy!, umagi lamang.*

They pass like smoke, merely like smoke
Everything in this world does
All that's sweet, alas, becomes bitter
As it has always been, alas, everything's fleeting.

*San-o pa, san-o pa?
San-o pa nga adlaw magbalik ang gugma
sa akon gintigay?
Ang mga matam-is, aháy!, naga-pait lang, aháy!
Sa gihapon, aháy!, umagi lamang.*

When, oh when?
When will the day come when the
love bestowed upon me shall return?
All that's sweet, alas, becomes bitter
As it has always been, alas, everything's fleeting.

- '*Lumalabáy nga daw asó*' (They pass like smoke)

Singing like Pilita

They sang. Straining against the sounds of the machines inside the intensive care suite, the three sisters and their cousin sang one song after another. Felicisima Mahilway, the sisters' 95-year old mother and their cousin's maternal aunt, and who was known to me as Lola Ising, was conscious. She was, however, visibly frail, having been resuscitated twice since she was rushed to the hospital after falling unconscious in the family house. It was a heart attack, I was told. By this time, she could move her head in response to simple questions; the ventilator connected to her rendered her voiceless. Likewise, she could try, albeit with effort, to remove the feeding tube that passed through her nose, prompting one of her daughters to place a pillow on her more mobile hand.

It was November, and Lola Ising had been in the expensive private hospital for a month. The sisters, the first three of nine surviving siblings, visited their mother

almost every day. Although the visiting hours for patients in the intensive care unit was limited to one hour in the late morning and one hour in the late afternoon, they often arrived hours earlier than the scheduled visiting time. It was in a room shared with the visitors of the other ICU patients where they usually waited. To pass the time, they would eat whilst chatting with one another, their mother's other visitors, and those of the other patients. Their other siblings were either away—in other parts of the Visayas, Manila, or the United States, where they had established their own lives—or, in the case of the second to the youngest, was at the family home, attending to the needs of the household. Almost every day, on my way home from interviews or archival research, I visited the family in the hospital.

The exact chain of events that led to the singing is already a blur in my mind, but I do recall Tita Mila, the eldest, humming a song that is usually sung during the feast of San José. 'We'll hire musicians and singers,' was how she coaxed her mother to get better in time for the feast in March. I remember too, how, when they noticed that their mother's eyes were moist, one of them sang '*Ngaa nagahibi ka, Inday?*' (Why are you crying, dear one?). When Lola Ising closed her eyes and seemed to be drifting to sleep, one of them sang '*Ili-ili tulog anay*' (Hush and sleep, little one), a lullaby popular in Iloilo, and which they had learnt as children some fifty to sixty years earlier.

Laughter and teasing accompanied the songs. 'Aren't they noisy, mother?,' one of the sisters asked in jest. 'It's just like hearing Pilita Corrales,' their cousin chimed in, referring to a chanteuse who became popular after the Second World War. Lola Ising nodded, and we all burst into laughter. One of them pointed at me and asked the old woman, 'doesn't he look like Mr Clean?,' a reference to my buzz cut, which apparently made me resemble the mascot of a popular detergent brand. Another asked Lola Ising to sing, which elicited a faint smile from the latter. Once again, we all laughed. Was it relief at seeing Lola Ising respond to us? Or was it to make light of an otherwise grave situation? Perhaps both.

Of all the songs sung that afternoon, one struck me as particularly poignant. With the rest of us watching, Tita Mila and her sister Tita Remy sang *Lumalabáy nga daw asó*. A folk song, it was popularised by the Mabuhay Singers, a group that came to national prominence starting in the late 1950s (see Lacuna 2011; D.M. Reyes 2009).

Previously unknown to me, I initially thought that the song was joyful. Its melody was upbeat and lilting, and indeed, I discovered later that the melody was used by a renowned dance researcher (and later, national artist) in choreographing the sprightly and iconic *salakót* (wide-brimmed hat) folk dance (Reyes-Tolentino 1946).

Yet, as I listened closely to the lyrics, I realised that the song speaks of the ephemerality of things, including love. Everything is fleeting, it proclaims. The interjection ‘*ahay!*’ abundant throughout the song, expresses sorrow and grief, but also resignation to the transitoriness that supposedly pervades life. Thus, I remember feeling uneasy and thinking that perhaps the song was slightly inappropriate as its theme of impermanence easily evoked the spectre of death.

I never got around to asking my companions why they sang that particular song. The arrival of the doctor shifted our attention to their mother’s condition, and soon it was time to go home. Subsequent events during my fieldwork (including Lola Ising’s passing), generated more urgent questions. Increasingly, the scene was pushed to the margins of my consciousness. And yet, it did remain memorable. When, as I wrote this thesis, I yearned for Iloilo and the ties of friendship and kinship that I made during my fieldwork, I often listened to online recordings of the song. Unsurprisingly, I came to understand the song—and the scene of which it was part—as instructive of the themes that are at the heart of this anthropological account of kinship, personhood, social mobility, and middle-classness in the central Philippines.

Siblings and journeys, lives and stories

In this thesis, I seek to grasp ethnographically how the ascent to middle-classness was experienced and remembered in the central Philippines. I pay attention to why and how people sought to achieve such mobility, and the various ways and idioms with which such an achievement was recalled and narrated. As the journeys that are at the heart of this thesis began decades prior to my fieldwork, my entry point to such passages was primarily the narratives that my interlocutors shared with me. Whilst such recountings referred mainly to the past, they were told in a present and had implications for the future. Indeed, rather than assume that these memories and

stories simply reflect completed journeys of social mobility, I examine their place in the very production and transmission of middle-classness. As the succeeding chapters demonstrate, stories are sites for claiming, defending, but also problematising class achievements. Moreover, and building on works on the aspirational character of middle-classness, these narratives allow me to appraise the consequences—both ‘sweet’ and ‘bitter’—that arise when aspirations are pursued and achieved. By taking a retrospective and long-term perspective on the achievement of middle-classness, I contribute to an intimate and more complex view of the temporalities of middle-class life.

The experiences and remembrances that I foreground in this thesis are primarily about movements from one class position to another; yet they necessarily encompass personal lives and relationships. In part, what emerges in this ethnography is the intimacy with which class mobility is interwoven with personal biographies, as well as familial histories and trajectories. The lives and stories that I discuss here portray middle-classness as something achieved by individuals, but also in and through kinship. They draw attention to how the quest for middle-classness enables, amplifies, requires, transforms, or sometimes precludes particular kinship ties and modes of personhood. And remembrances themselves have repercussions for persons and their relations. By attending to the pursuit of middle-classness and the accounts generated in its wake, I accentuate the complex and at times contradictory emotions that surround journeys of social mobility, whilst historicising the very selves and relations within which such narratives and emotions are embedded.

In what follows, siblingship is a critical frame for investigating the nexus of kinship, personhood, social mobility, and middle-classness. Siblingship is of course a principal locus and idiom of kinship in the Philippines and elsewhere in island Southeast Asia; it is also central to construals of personhood in the region. Yet, as I will elaborate below, anthropologists have only recently begun to understand sibling ties as they unfold through time; often, siblingship is discussed in relation to childhood. Meanwhile, in studies of social mobility, siblingship tends to be overshadowed by an emphasis on intergenerational relations, particularly between parents and children (and in some cases, specifically between fathers and sons).

This thesis thus endeavours to broaden the remit of studies of both social mobility and siblingship by accounting for the roles of siblings in crafting middle-classness. As the succeeding chapters demonstrate, the equality but also hierarchy implied by siblingship, and the expectations of mutual solidarity and reciprocity that permeate it underpinned journeys of social mobility. At the same time, the very pursuit of mobility transformed sibling ties: in some cases, these were strengthened, but in others, these became frayed, and sometimes rewoven. It appears too that dispersion, inequalities, conflicts, as well as shrinking family sizes have constrained over time and across generations the expansiveness of siblingship.

This thesis likewise mainly considers siblingship not in the context of childhood, but from the perspective of (late) adulthood, thus accentuating how the meanings and significance of sibling ties accumulate and shift over time and in relation to marriage and having one's own children, the pursuit of professional careers, and caring for and the death of one's parents. Viewing both siblingship and social mobility from the vantage point of (late) adulthood permits a consideration of how quests for middle-classness and attempts to negotiate the demands and affordances of siblingship (including the crafting of personal autonomy) are intertwined with one another. A focus on siblingship, in fact, incorporates the intergenerational emphasis of studies of social mobility; as the cases I consider here demonstrate, siblings may be expected to be parents to one another, and ties of siblingship implicate ascending and descending generations.

Accounts and experiences of middle-classness, in turn, constitute a rich entry point to the narrative dimension, not only as I have already indicated, of social mobility and middle-classness, but also of relations and personhood. As I have learnt from the people who appear in this ethnography, narrating is very much a charged act: it makes or breaks identities and reputations, as well as the relations that persons form part of, and from which stories derive their power but also limit. As will become clear in the different chapters, one picture that arises here is of siblings being part of a shared story, whilst at the same time, having (or at least aspiring to have) their own versions, biographies, and other stories to tell. This means too that they are in a position to contest a sibling's narration or to reveal something that has been elided. Whilst one person may emphasise successful journeys of mobility, their siblings may

choose to highlight the heightening of inequalities and differences within the family, or how that person abdicated on their responsibilities, thus endangering their siblings' chances of achieving middle-classness.

Whilst I foreground here narratives as embedded in persons and their relations, I emphasise that these are not just about particular individuals, families, and even villages. Stories, to begin with, are told following generic conventions that are socially shared and historically shaped. Moreover, the stories discussed here shed light and comment on broader historical moments and political economic shifts, including colonialism, imperial wars, postcolonial state-building, and globalisation. I thus underscore in this work the intimate repercussions of these wider moments and processes and how they are folded into ordinary lives, given meaning, and come to inform further actions. In this sense, I join anthropologists who have refused the abiding separation between and amongst kinship, the economy, and other aspects of social life.

Ambivalence and transformation

Given the concerns that animate me, I have situated this enquiry in the nexus of three bodies of scholarship. The first is the interdisciplinary literature on middle classes and social mobility. Although sociologists and economists dominate this literature, social anthropologists have also made contributions, particularly in recent years. The second is the anthropological study of kinship and relatedness, and siblingship in particular, especially works that highlight the ambivalent and possibly hostile and injurious character of kinship ties. I have likewise drawn from works that foreground how ties may wax and wane over time. The third is the regional scholarship on the Philippines and island Southeast Asia and its critical contributions to studies of kinship, social mobility, and middle-classness.

The achievements of becoming middle class

The social science literature on social mobility and the middle classes is vast and contested, and I do not cover everything here (for useful overviews, see the essays in Butler & Savage 1995; Crompton 2008 [1993]; Kerckhoff 1984; Savage 1992: chap. 1; 2000: 72-98; Wacquant 1991). Instead, I highlight a subset of this literature that portrays journeys of social mobility as anxiety-ridden and generative of ambivalences. In a parallel manner, I foreground works that pay attention to the experiential and emotional dimensions of middle-classness, including how it generates multiple and contradictory feelings due to the social in-betweenness and the temporal orientations that it entails.

The hidden costs of mobility

In contrast with the dominant position, which Friedman (2014) has described as having taken the view that social mobility is inherently and unequivocally good, and having been concerned with the quantitative measurement of mobility and its rates (Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992; Goldthorpe 1980; Goldthorpe & Jackson 2007), others have taken a more circumspect, if not critical, and experience-grounded view.

In fact, earlier sociological analyses emphasised the dislocations that socially mobile individuals experience (Blau 1956; Sorokin 1959 [1927]), a theme that goes back to Durkheim (2002 [1897]) and his analysis of anomie. Sennett & Cobb (1977 [1972]), for instance, have written on the injurious effects of social mobility on individuals' sense of self, as well as their various relationships, amidst a context where everyone is compelled to prove their ability, yet the means to do so are severely constrained. In Britain, Hoggart (1960 [1957]: 291-317) has presented a delicate portrait of how the upwardly mobile, as seen in the figure of the 'scholarship boy,' are uprooted from their class of origin and may feel uneasy over their new circumstances.

More recent works have sought to retrieve this less celebratory approach by highlighting upward mobility's 'hidden costs,' particularly how it leads to fragmented dispositions and senses of self (e.g. Friedman 2014; 2016). These works draw inspiration from the earlier literature, but combine their insights with those of feminists and other gender scholars (e.g. Lawler 1999; Skeggs 1997) to account for the

gender-specificity of experiences and narrations of social mobility. Also, these recent works have sought to recast interpretations of Bourdieu's oeuvre (e.g. 1984 [1979]; 1996 [1989]) that emphasise the durability of habitus into one that accentuates transformations and disruptions over time. This latter theme is traced to Bourdieu's later works (2003; 2007 [2004]) where, in the spirit of 'participant objectivation,' he subjected his own trajectory to analysis, and in doing so, noted the displacements that he experienced on the way to the pinnacle of French academia.

Alongside this alternative sociological approach, a few anthropologists have also ventured to examine the lives of the socially mobile. Caroline and Filippo Osella (2000), for example, have written on the Izhavas, a formerly untouchable community in Kerala. Although members of the community sought to improve their standing through various means, they were unable to overcome entrenched and emergent forms of social exclusion, thus making them feel conflicted in relation to 'progress' and 'modernity.' In the context of the post-war United States, Ortner (2003) has written an account of the trajectories of the members of her high school class. In particular, she looked at the ways in which she and her classmates sought to effect upward mobility and how these intersected with broader moments and shifts in US history, and how ideals and experiences of upward mobility were suffused by socially shaped notions of success. At the same time, she paid attention to how upward mobility generated ambivalent feelings about the fragility of success and its consequences for relations and the self.

My own work is in the mould of these anthropological and sociological antecedents: I track and historicise the various strategies for upward mobility pursued by the people I worked with; I contextualise the different ideals of success that underpinned their strategies, and I accentuate the emotional tenor of social mobility. I foreground social mobility's disruptive consequences, and how these may co-exist alongside more pleasurable and aspiration-generating and affirming outcomes. I likewise combine these antecedents' insights with those coming from recent interventions on the social life of achievement (e.g. Long 2013; see essays in Long & Moore 2013a). Whilst not directly and explicitly about class mobility, these recent works are germane to my enquiry since upward movements in social standing—and the various acts and circumstances seen as leading to such movements—were

considered by my interlocutors as achievements. For Long and Moore (2013*b*, following Humphrey 2008), an achievement is productively seen as an event that either entrenches or ruptures prior forms of knowledge and imagination about, and ways of relating to, one's self and others. Echoing the points mentioned above, they also remind us that the consequences that arise in the wake of an achievement—both on the part of the achiever and of those around them—may not be consistent with those aspired for, and this unpredictability may account for ambivalence towards achieving.

I extend these latter insights in this thesis by shifting the temporal emphasis to the past—or more precisely, to the past as recalled in the present. In their formulation, Long and Moore emphasise how achievements have lives of their own. The social life of achievement, they tell us, rolls forward over time (Long & Moore 2013*a*: 5). They and their collaborators thus pay attention to the affective, discursive, and relational consequences of feats, and how these shape trajectories of attainments. The material that I discuss in this thesis, however, prompts a reflection on how the achievements of social mobility are recalled years and even decades after they have transpired or have been set into motion, and at the same time, feed into the maintenance and furthering of upward movement. How might the ambivalences of success, social mobility, and achievements be voiced, made sense of, and perhaps resolved through recollections? Moreover, as the scene that I described at the beginning evokes, ageing and death cast a shadow on the accounts that are at the heart of this enquiry. How then might we make sense of social mobility and its accomplishments from the vantage point of later life? Closely related to this, how might accounts of mobility shed light on relations between generations? I shall return to these issues below, in the discussion on kinship.

Inevitably, I consider in this thesis how failure coexisted and intertwined with achievement, success, and upward mobility. I explicate how failure was conceived, experienced, and spoken of by the people I met, and how it shaped their actions and relations. I examine in particular how failure was explained and at times rendered invisible in a context of general success, and how it was entangled with issues of gender and generation.

Projecting middle-classness

It is not just, however, journeys of social mobility and the achievements they entail that are potentially rife with ambivalence and disruptive of ties and notions of self. So too is middle-classness itself, which in many contexts, such as those of my interlocutors, is the desired outcome of upward mobility. Here, I draw from scholars who conceptualise middle-classness in terms of practice and everyday life, an analytical tradition inspired by E.P. Thompson's (1968 [1963]) study of the formation of the English working class (Dickey 2012; Fuller & Narasimhan 2014; Heiman, Freeman, *et al.* 2012; James 2015; Liechty 2003; Ortner 2003).

These scholars examine middle-classness less as something that is possessed (or a location that is occupied), and more as an ongoing cultural project where people seek to distinguish themselves from their social and class others. As such, these scholars pay attention to the various material and discursive practices through which people strive to construct themselves as middle class in historically and culturally specific terms. Such practices include those centred on consumption and the distinctions they generate, and more broadly, the crafting of hierarchies of morality and the setting of class boundaries (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]; Lamont 1992). Moreover, by foregrounding process, these scholars have likewise expanded the scope of studies of middle-class life to include those who aspire to such a life, even if they may not be classified, for instance, by economists and statisticians, as properly middle class.

As Liechty (2003) has pointed out, the middle classes' ambiguous relationship to the economy (they are neither capitalist nor labourer and are more defined by consumption rather than their role in production), along with the ongoing character of practices, render middle-class standing precarious. The distinctions that the middle classes craft between themselves and others are often contested by the elites, as well as the lower classes. There are also the status contests—mapped along various axes, including professional, geographical, and even generational—amongst would-be and self-identified middle classes.

Moreover, dependence on salaries and entrepreneurship means that the middle classes always face the need to prove their worth amidst competition. They likewise contend with the pressures of not failing (Ehrenreich 1989), as well as the ever-changing fashions of consumer culture. In many places, such fashions are

powerful but out of reach for most people, thus prompting Schielke (2012) to describe aspirational middle-classes as constantly ‘living in the future tense.’ Furthermore, scholars have noted how in some places, the middle classes are caught between what is described as ‘traditional life’ and those that are judged as ‘modern,’ thereby adding another layer of complexity into what is already a knotty predicament (e.g. Besnier 2011; Fuller & Narasimhan 2014; Gewertz & F.K. Errington 1999; Liechty 2003; Osella & Osella 2000).

In engaging with and contributing to the recent anthropological consideration of middle-class lives and projects (Heiman, Liechty, *et al.* 2012; see also R.T. Smith 1984), I take in this thesis a two-fold approach. First, and building on the emphasis on narratives discussed above, I describe how middle-classness, warts and all, was apprehended in and through narratives (see Liechty 2003; Ortner 2003). I also consider here how middle-class projects involved conforming to, adapting, or perhaps rejecting widely circulating narratives of what middle-classness should be like. Central here too is how narratives were sites for instantiating—but also questioning and erasing—distinctions, moral judgments, and prestige hierarchies. Such narratives were also means for registering and at times occluding the precariousness of middle-class standing. Given that the narrations were mainly retrospective accounts, I likewise reflect on the ‘work of time’ (Das 2007) in relation to middle-classness. Finally, through such narratives, I unpack how the people I came to know located themselves and their trajectories within broader histories and economies (Lawler 2008; Maynes *et al.* 2008).

The second approach that I take follows the emphasis on the personal and relational consequences of upward mobility delineated above. In a series of works, Skeggs (2004a; 2004b; 2011) has foregrounded how middle-classness, particularly in the British and American contexts, is intertwined with a specific kind of personhood—one that accrues property and value in the self—and which, in turn, has been institutionalised through the law and other discourses. I follow her lead here, but I do not wish to exaggerate historical and cultural differences in personhood; at the same time, and in keeping with the kinship perspective that I discuss below, I examine personhood in the lives and relations within which they are embedded (see Carsten 2004: chap. 4; see also Bloch 2012 for a cognitivist position). I am particularly

concerned with how people may come to inhabit the possessive kind of personhood described by Skeggs in a context where it is not necessarily dominant and may coexist with other ways of being a person. By doing so, I not only foreground how persons act in history, but also how being a person itself is something that is historical (see Holland & Lave 2001).

Kinship economies

In examining how social mobility and middle-classness were intertwined with kinship, I join anthropologists who have theorised the role of kinship in the economy and who have problematised the discipline's domaining practices (see the essays in McKinnon & Cannell 2013*a*). From this perspective, kinship is not simply, as suggested before, an idiom for property and other economic relations (e.g. Leach 1961), but a force that shapes the economy, including the inequalities and relations that constitute capitalism (Bear *et al.* 2015). As such, and in contrast to earlier portrayals, rather than kinship being antithetical to or outside of 'modernity' however understood, the former may actually be constitutive of or even exceed the latter (Lambek 2013; McKinnon & Cannell 2013*b*). At the same time, I draw on scholarship that demonstrates how kinship itself is underpinned by economic transactions, and responds to wider economic, political, and other historical changes (see, amongst others, Carsten 1989; Das 2010; 2015; Han 2011; 2012; Stack 1974; Yan 2003; Zelizer 1996; 2005).

In foregrounding kinship analytically, I pay attention to local 'statements and practices' of relatedness and their place in experiences and narrations of social mobility and middle-classness (Carsten 2000*a*; 2004). At the same time, I accentuate how kinship is shaped historically, including by more distant institutions, events, and processes. Although scholars have emphasised the role of families in enabling or impeding changes in social location, they have done so mostly in the European familial context (Bertaux 1995; 2000; Bertaux & Bertaux-Wiame 2007 [1997]; P. Thompson 2007 [1997]). Here then is an anthropological opening: how might a

different picture of social mobility arise from kinship contexts other than that of Europe?

Given what anthropologists have noted as the centrality of sibling ties in the Philippines and other parts of island Southeast Asia (see below), I foreground relations amongst brothers and sisters in my account. In this sense, this work is meant to be a contribution to the incipient study of siblingship, which, in the anthropological case, has been overshadowed by the historical dominance of descent and alliance as analytical frames in studies of kinship (but see Alber *et al.* 2013; Carsten 1997; Cumming & Schneider 1961; Davidoff 2012; Marshall 1981).

In particular, I follow Lambek's (2011) persuasive argument that we might view siblingship (and kinship more broadly) from the perspective of life's later stages. In doing so, I portray how those who shared their lives with me saw the unfolding over time of the sibling ties of which they were part, but also how such ties extended to the future through the succeeding generations (see Carsten 2013). Moreover, I endeavour to portray ties of siblingship in relation to other forms of kinship, such as filiation and marriage, including the frictions that arise between these kinds of relations. As Han (2012; following Strathern 2005) has beautifully evoked in her work, humans are always already enmeshed in a multiplicity of relations that unfold in time, and which are lived in varying degrees of intensity. Thus, how people lived as siblings—but also as mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, cousins, uncles, and aunts—amidst the difficulties and possibilities engendered by middle-class projects and social mobility is an abiding concern of this thesis.

Indeed, in invoking kinship as a lens with which to view social mobility and middle-classness, I do not take for granted the harmonious qualities of kinship ties. On the contrary, I pay attention to their less genial aspects. Here, I follow contemporary anthropologists who have problematised an earlier conceptualisation of kinship in terms of an 'axiom of amity' (Fortes 1969) or 'enduring diffuse solidarity' (Schneider 1980 [1968]). Instead, these anthropologists have portrayed kinship as a site of ambivalence, hierarchy, and enmity; as entailing acts of theft and ingratitude; as composed of weighty, competing, and highly constraining obligations; and as saturated by loss, ruptures, and discontinuities (Carsten 2000*b*; 2007*a*; 2013; Das 2007; 2015; A. Garcia 2014; Han 2012; 2014; Lambek 2011; Leinaweaver 2013; McKinnon 2017;

Peletz 1995; 2001). In highlighting this other side of kinship, these scholars have directed attention to how people live with both the convivial and less convivial aspects of relations.

So, in addition to considering siblingship in relation to other forms of kinship, I pursue this line of thinking by grasping the inequalities fostered by projects of social mobility and middle-classness and their implications for ties of kinship. In particular, I examine these inequalities in relation to age, generation, and gender. As I will elaborate below, age and generation are central structural dimensions of kinship in island Southeast Asia. Gender too is salient, particularly given how routes to middle-classness, such as opportunities in education, professional pursuits, and migration, were experienced by the people I worked with as profoundly gendered. Relevant too is how these routes were realised partly through the unequal and gendered distribution of responsibilities in the family, especially in relation to elder care, the ramifications of which extended to the next generation. I thus take heed of the feminist insight that kinship cannot be analysed independent of gender, and that studying one leads to an illumination of the other (Carsten 2004: chap. 3; Yanagisako & Collier 1987).

I should emphasise that in examining siblingship and its various entanglements, I pay attention not only to relations amongst humans, but also the role of various non-humans in enabling, mediating, and at times, constraining these relations. In the chapters that follow, money, land, houses, and photographs are some of the significant non-human entities. Religious and spiritual beings, such as saints and the divine, souls, and the dead, also form part of my account. By attending to these entities, I register my agreement with anthropologists who have drawn attention to how a human is one ‘who is already within a web of relations with both humans and nonhumans’ (Das 2015: 118), those who have critiqued the unexamined religious assumptions of kinship studies and anthropology more generally (Cannell 2005a; 2013), and those who have noted the centrality of materialisation in engendering kinship ties (see McKinnon 2017).

Part of what emerges in my account is how kinship ideals and practices shift over time, and how people bring about and come to terms with such changes. Changes in kinship occur over a lifetime, but also across generations, defined not just

in terms of kinship layers, but also historical cohorts with shared experiences and ways of viewing and inhabiting the world (Mannheim 1952 [1927]; see also Kertzer 1983; Loizos 2007; D. Scott 2014). Although members of a sibling set are often conceived as belonging to the same generation, it is also possible for a sibling set to straddle generational divides, with consequences for the members of the set and their other kin.

Moreover, and following what demographers and historians of the family have referred to as ‘demographic transition,’ family sizes tend to become smaller over time in societies that are experiencing processes of modernisation. As Johnson-Hanks (2008: 303) has emphasised, a smaller sibling set size in one generation implies fewer aunts, uncles, and cousins in the next. Whilst this study is not an exercise in ‘anthropological demography’ (Kertzer & Fricke 1997), I discuss in several places the personal and relational consequences of smaller sibling sets. I also discuss other demographic shifts, such as delayed marriages, changing preferences in marriage partners, and migratory moves. Following Lambek (2013: 245), the meanings of demographic shifts need to be elucidated; part of understanding ‘demographies in flux’ (Day 2012) is apprehending how these changes transform the experiential dimensions of kinship.

Earlier, I have mentioned that part of what I do in this thesis is to understand social mobility and middle-classness as they intertwine with issues of personhood, which, I add here, has been central to the revitalisation of kinship studies in the same way that contemporary scholarship on kinship may contribute to a renewal of how personhood is understood (Carsten 2004: chap. 4). Thus, I provide a sketch of the history of personhood as it unfolded in the lives and relations of my interlocutors, whilst bringing to the fore the views of the persons I met in the field. Partly a consequence of how my fieldwork unfolded (discussed below), this foregrounding also stems from a desire to craft an account that, whilst sensitive to broader contexts, remains close to the experiences of my interlocutors and does justice to the singularity of their lives (Chatterji 2005; Das 2007; Han 2012; Wikan 1991).

I now come back to the narratives of middle-classness and social mobility that are fundamental to my undertaking. Such narratives, as I have indicated, were as much about kinship and personhood as they were about trajectories of class mobility.

To begin with, the narratives said something about what it meant for people to be related to others. Their telling, in fact, were occasions when they grappled with, for instance, how it is to be a brother or a sister whilst being your own person at the same time. Also, such narrations (or at least most of them) were given in the context of kinship moments and demonstrated some of the ways in which my informants lived their relationships. As I describe more fully in a subsequent section, although the accounts were initially given in the context of interviews, later accounts were made at wakes and funerals, or during religious feasts, but also in the course of everyday domestic activities.

Moreover, the telling of stories demonstrated how siblings and other kin were engaged in the ‘mutuality of being’ that Sahlins (2013) describes as intrinsic to kinship, since these stories frequently demonstrated deep intimacy with the lives of their kinspersons, and at times, included facets that their kinsfolk were reluctant to share with me (see also Lawler 2008). Indeed, scholars have shone light on the ways in which remembrances and other forms of narratives are central to the constitution of kinship ties (see the essays in Carsten 2007*b*). At the same time, there were instances when those I worked with shared bits of their biographies that were otherwise concealed from their kin (see Day 2007*a*). Meanwhile, some of these recountings were moments when people gave voice to the ambivalences and enmities that formed part of their relations. In this way, the narration of stories bore resemblance to what Das (2007: 10) described as the activities that formed part of the ‘aesthetics of kinship’ amongst the people she worked with in India: ‘the constant allusions to betrayal of trust, infidelities, and the failure to live up to the high moral ideals of kinship solidarity.’

In view of this double-sidedness, I highlight in my account what these narratives did in relation to persons and their relations. I attend to the ways in which they registered the inequalities and conflicts engendered by class mobility, as well as how they gave rise to particular biographical understandings and interpretive and normative claims on how relations unfolded or ought to have unfolded over time. Similarly, I consider in the following chapters how the narratives that I have elicited affirmed ongoing relations, delineated the fractures of kinship, but also hinted at the

possibility of repairing ruptured ties. In these ways, this thesis calls attention to the ways in which kinship and narratives are intimately intertwined.

Kinship and social mobility in Southeast Asia and the Philippines

By foregrounding kinship and especially siblingship, I follow anthropologists and other scholars who have emphasised kinship as central to understanding Southeast Asia. This is particularly true amongst those who have highlighted the preponderance in the region of cognatic kinship and a number of associated characteristics: the flexibility of kinship rules; the importance of the domestic unit; the relative symmetry between men and women, the latter's autonomy, and their centrality in economic life; the significance of generation and age in structuring social relations; and the pervasive emphasis on the present and the future as opposed to the past (see, amongst others, S. Errington 1989; 1990; Geertz & Geertz 1964; 1975; Kemp & Hüsken 1991; Murdock 1960; Reid 1988; Steedly 1999: 434-35; O.W. Wolters 1999 [1982]).

Earlier scholarship, however, tended to portray the cognatic societies of Southeast Asia as lacking in structure and permanence, often in comparison and conceptual opposition with the unilineal societies of Africa (see Astuti 1995; Carsten 1997: 271). In the absence of lineages and corporate groups, anthropologists accentuated the centrality of households and amorphous ego-centred kindreds and alliances (Freeman 1961; Murdock 1960). In this vein, descriptions like Embree's (1950) 'loosely structured society' became commonplace in the literature. This was, in fact, something that resonated in the literature on the Philippines, with Lynch's (1959: 4) contention that 'relatives are important but the importance is relative' and Kikuchi's (1991) designation of Philippine society as 'uncrystallized' as prime examples (for a recent interpretation, see Macdonald 2013).

In contrast with these earlier works, a later and more positive rendering of Southeast Asian cognatic kinship underscored the primacy of siblingship as an organising principle, force, and idiom. McKinley's (1981) intervention was pivotal, and subsequent anthropologists, such as Carsten (1991; 1995*a*; 1995*b*; 1997; see also Carsten

& Hugh-Jones 1995), S. Errington (1987; 1989; 1990), and Peletz (1988) have pursued this theme in their respective ethnographies.

It has thus become possible to see how generations are conceived of in the region as layers of sibling sets; how siblingship takes logical precedence over filiation and affinity; how marriage itself may be productively seen as the coming together of sibling sets and their transformation over time into consanguines; how siblingship encompasses both equality and hierarchy (as structured by age and birth order), as well as sameness and difference (i.e. gender); and how it is constitutive of personhood—that is, to be a person is to be part of a sibling set and the wider kinship networks within which it is embedded. The emphasis on siblingship, has in fact developed in conjunction with an analysis of the house and its significance for social relations, the processual and temporal dimensions of kinship, and the everyday world and emotional texture of kinship ties.

Notably, the emphasis on these dimensions of kinship has meant that on a regional level, both cognatic and non-cognatic (e.g. in Eastern Indonesia) societies of Southeast Asia may now be viewed using a similar lens (see Allerton 2013; Carsten 1997; Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995; S. Errington 1989; 1990; McKinnon 1995; Waterson 1995). Beyond the region, such an emphasis has had a global import as it has contributed to the contemporary renaissance of the anthropological study of kinship. Carsten's earlier work on Malaysia is of utmost significance, not the least because of how it shaped and influenced her later—more comparative and globalising—interventions, which continue to hold sway in kinship studies (e.g. Carsten 2000c; 2004; 2007b).

My thesis builds on the gains of these anthropologists of Southeast Asia, and in doing so, it follows in the footsteps of recent ethnographies of the Philippines. Cannell's (1999, especially chap. 2) account explicitly draws from Carsten's and Errington's works, amongst others, to recast Bicolano kinship in processual and siblingship-centric terms. More recent accounts highlight the continued significance of sibling ties amidst transnational migration, a theme that resonates with this thesis (Aguilar 2009; 2013a; Aguilar *et al.* 2009; D. McKay 2012). As such, part of what this thesis does is to bring to bear these recent developments in the study of Southeast Asian and Filipino kinship on the Western Visayas region, where I did my fieldwork

(see below). Some of the pioneering works in post-war Philippine anthropology were conducted in the region, and, in keeping with the prevailing disciplinary fashion, early studies of kinship emphasised terminological and functional analyses (M.A. Gonzalez 1965; Jocano 1968; 1969; 1983).

Yet, even as I build on these recent gains, I remain cognisant of the complex history of kinship in the Philippines. Accounts remain incomplete, but anthropologists and historians have noted the significance of Spanish and American colonial policies, Catholicism, state discourses, and internal and transnational migration, amongst others, in shaping and transforming kinship norms and practices (see, amongst others, Aguilar 1998: 57-58; Blanc-Szanton 1990; Cannell 1999: chap. 2; for a synthesis, see Cruz 2012).

As Aguilar *et al.* (2009: 104) have noted, the country's complex history has led to a situation where the Spanish-derived and law-enshrined notion of the family 'jostles' with cognatic kinship norms and practices. Meanwhile, other scholars have noted variations in kinship practices along geographical and class lines (Cruz 2012; Madianou & Miller 2012: 22-26; Xenos & Kabamalan 2007). The account that I offer in this thesis demonstrates the 'jostling' of kinship norms and practices—for instance, the ways in which siblingship and filiation related to one another, and, as I mentioned above, how gender symmetry coincided with the genderedness of educational and professional opportunities—but also how such norms and practices changed over time and across generations.

Much less clear in the literature is personhood, as there has largely been no sustained investigation of the topic in the Philippine context (for a recent exception, see Bulloch 2016). Earlier works in Philippine studies suggest, however, that Filipino personhood is shaped and formed over time through social relations, including exchanges and ties of reciprocity; consequently, the breakdown of these ties and relations have tremendous repercussions for a person's social and moral standing (Enriquez 1986 [1978]; Hollnsteiner 1973 [1962]; Kaut 1961; Lynch 1973a [1962]; Rafael 1993 [1988]). Moreover, whilst interactions and relations with others are formative of personhood, these are also sites for judgment, competition, conflict, control, domination, and also resistance (Cannell 1999; Hollnsteiner 1963a; Mulder 1993). Such a glimpse is consistent with ethnographic accounts from elsewhere in Southeast Asia

and Austronesia that emphasise the relational and processual character of personhood in these regions (see Astuti 1995; Bloch 1993; Carsten 1995*a*; 1997; Retsikas 2012).

Some recent accounts, influenced by Strathern (1988), have sought to recast Philippine personhood using the language of dividuality emanating from Melanesian ethnography (e.g. D. McKay 2010; 2012). In this thesis, I follow these recent works and their precedents by examining the extent to which personhood is entwined in relations, including siblingship. Yet, as I have mentioned above, I do not wish to reify and exaggerate differences between Western ('individual') and non-Western ('dividual') personhood, and so I also examine how the relational dimension of personhood may co-exist with individuality, particularly in the context of economic changes often linked to the rise of personal autonomy (see below). Significantly, earlier accounts have drawn attention to the importance of individual achievement, autonomy, and uniqueness in various historical and contemporary settings in Southeast Asia (e.g. Li 1998; O.W. Wolters 1999 [1982]).

This thesis likewise builds on studies that explicitly consider kinship in relation to social mobility in the region. Here, I follow Cespedes (1971; Cespedes & Gibbs 1972) and Nagata (1976) whose prescient works on Philippine and Malay kinship, respectively, demonstrated how upward mobility and the consequent generation of status differences amongst kin sometimes led to generational shifts in values and to the attenuation of ties. These changes were, in turn, registered in quotidian and ever subtle ways, such as terminological usages and everyday decisions pertaining to exchange and reciprocity. Similarly, Arce (1970: 90), adopting a modernisation perspective, has suggested that for the Philippines and other modernising countries, increased social mobility leads to the weakening of kinship ties, including the nuclearisation of families, the rise of personal autonomy, and the decline of the importance of the family relative to other social institutions (for later, more tempered views, see Arce 1994; Miralao 1997).

I differ from these works, as I have said, by emphasising siblingship (which, albeit present, is not central to these earlier works); by considering not only how social mobility might transform kinship, but also how the latter might be reproduced

in and through the former, as well as how the former may depend on the latter; and by taking a more long-term, experience-close, and emotionally-attuned approach.

Indeed, my account dovetails with recent works stemming from the region that seek to reposition the anthropological study of emotions. To begin with, Southeast Asia has had a distinguished place in this subfield of anthropology (see, for example, C. Geertz 1973; M.Z. Rosaldo 1980; R. Rosaldo 1984; for a recent overview, see Boellstorff & Lindquist 2004). More recent works, however, emphasise the need to situate emotions within their personal, relational, temporal, and narrative contexts, an approach consistent with this thesis's focus (Beatty 2005; 2010; 2014; see also Wikan 1990; 1991). In fact, within kinship studies, and parallel to this development in the anthropology of emotions, the emphasis on ambivalences within relations is firmly rooted in ethnographic accounts of Southeast Asian societies (see Peletz 1995: 360-62; 2001).

By foregrounding experiences and emotions, my account complements earlier work on social mobility in the Philippines. Reflecting the dominant approach to social mobility research in the United States and elsewhere (see above), these works were mostly quantitative in approach and economic or demographic in focus. These sought to measure rates of mobility and often compared differences across generations. Here, intergenerational (but also intragenerational) occupational differences were a central concern (e.g. Bacol 1971; de Guzman 1983), and this interest was partly spurred by the post-war expansion of the professions in the Philippines (see Cariño 1973; Castillo 1962; Tiryakian 1958; 1959; Voth 1970).

In general, these studies highlighted several patterns current at that time: how occupations tended to be inherited across generations (especially for the highest and lowest occupational strata); how vertical mobility tended to be short-distance, with upward mobility occurring more than downward movement; and how lower-ranked professions (e.g. teaching) and semi-professional occupations (e.g. office clerkship) were more open to mobile individuals. Meanwhile, others investigated how social mobility may reduce fertility and other demographic processes, but also how low fertility and delayed marriages may enable upward mobility (de Guzman 1983; Deming 1975). As with social mobility research in general, these early works did not capture the more affective and experiential dimensions of the mobility process.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of middle-classness in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Indeed, Philippinists have not until recently, paid attention to the middle classes. This elision is due to the dominance of a framework that posited Philippine society as being composed of two classes—the ‘big people’ and the ‘small people’ or land-owning elites and the masses—that are functionally dependent on one another and tied through patronage. To the extent that the existence of the middle classes was recognised, they were seen as limited to the large cities (for classic statements, see Lynch 1959; 2004 [1984]). The dominance of this framework has been challenged, and beginning in the 1980s, but most especially in the 1990s—after the downfall of the Marcos regime and when the Philippines underwent economic liberalisation—scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the middle classes (see Turner 1995 for an overview).

Much of what has been written thus far on Philippine middle classes emphasises the historical and political economic underpinnings of their emergence (e.g. Pinches 1992; 1999). Here, prominence is given to the post-Second World War decline of the landowning *mestizo* elite whose rise to power started during the Spanish colonial period and was consolidated during the American occupation (Aguilar 1998; B. Anderson 1988). Their decline resulted from a number of factors, including: the promotion in the 1950s of import-substitution industrialisation (which, in turn, led to the transformation of some of the landed elite into urban capitalists, as well as the growth of the ranks of urban professionals, semi-professionals, and state functionaries); the rise in the 1970s of authoritarianism (which involved the seizure of the properties of elites who were part of the opposition, and the coming into power of the educated middle classes as technocrats); and the post-1986 emergence of the entrepreneurial ‘new rich’ and of corporate executives and managers and other similar professionals.

In addition, the introduction of public education during the American colonial period and its expansion after the war, as well as transnational migration especially since the 1970s have been deemed significant to the growth of the middle classes. In the case of the latter, it has been suggested that the remittance-driven expansion of the middle classes has posed a challenge to the cultural dominance of the more established elite and middle classes, thus prompting the redrawing—in

some cases, reassertion—of class boundaries; middle-class migrants and their upwardly-mobile peers could very well experience complex and even contradictory class movements as they straddle the Philippines and their destination countries (see Aguilar 1996; 2003; 2014; Kelly 2012; Pinches 2001). Meanwhile, scholars have only begun to consider the consequences for the expansion of the middle classes and economic development more generally of the growth since the 2000s of the business processes outsourcing (BPO) industry (Beerepoot & Vozelgang 2016; Beerepoot & Hendriks 2013; Padios 2013).

More recently, and echoing the earlier studies on social mobility discussed above, studies of Philippine middle classes have sought to profile them based on survey data. Scholars have attempted to arrive at a portrait of who constitute these classes, their origins, consumption practices, outlooks, and lifestyle (C. Bautista 2001a; 2001b; 2001c). This has likewise involved presenting ways in which the middle classes may be measured—often through income and occupation, but also housing and household characteristics and possessions (e.g. Albert *et al.* 2015; C. Bautista 2001d). Through these measures, scholars justify the significance of the middle classes: in Albert *et al.*'s estimate, for example, 45.8 per cent of total households in the country were considered as of 2012 as either lower middle, middle, or upper middle class. Notably, these accounts coincide with popular discourses on the increased salience of the middle classes amidst the economic boom of the past several years (e.g. Dinglasan 2013; Magtulis 2016). Parallel to measuring the size of the middle classes, a number of scholars have paid attention to these classes' political views and practices, and their central if ambivalent role in post-1986 Philippine politics (Abinales 2008; Encarnacion-Tadem 2008; Garrido 2008; Kimura 2003; Rivera 2001; Seki 2012; Villegas & Yang 2013).

My thesis contributes to the literature on Philippine middle classes in several ways. As I have indicated above, it takes a long-term and processual view of middle-classness, and one that is grounded on persons and their relations. In addition to complementing the broad history of the emergence of the middle classes sketched above, it accentuates the practices through which middle-classness is constituted and reproduced over time. With a few exceptions (such as those pertaining to overseas migration and middle-classness cited above), most of the existing studies of the

middle classes in the Philippines do not capture the relational and changing meanings and contours of middle-classness over time (see also Garrido 2008; J.C. Ong 2015*a*; 2015*b*; Seki 2012; Villegas & Yang 2013).

Moreover, by foregrounding kinship in my analysis, I aim to present a picture of the intimate politics of middle-classness, which has been thus far excluded from view, notwithstanding the earlier works cited above that were explicitly about the implications on kinship of becoming middle class. In this regard, I take my cue from other scholars of Southeast Asia who have examined how middle-classness is constituted in and through the domestic and the familial (e.g. Jones 2004; Stivens 1998) (see other essays in Sen & Stivens 1998). Finally, by situating my study outside of the Philippine capital of Manila, I join scholars of the region who have highlighted the contributions of examining the middle classes from the vantage point of the provinces (Van Klinken 2014; Van Klinken & Berenschot 2014). It is to this issue of place that I now turn.

Between the river and the sea

I pursue the themes delineated above from the vantage point of Iloilo City, the highly urbanised capital of the province of the same name. A 45-minute plane ride away from the Philippine capital of Manila, it is also considered as the economic, political, and cultural centre of both the island of Panay (which Iloilo province shares with Aklan, Antique, and Capiz provinces; see Map 2) and the greater Western Visayas region. As such, it is the site of state offices, commercial and financial enterprises, media entities, hospitals, and educational institutions. These establishments service residents not just of the city, but also of the surrounding towns and provinces. One indicator of the city's significance perhaps is the fact that, during my fieldwork, it had three of the four Starbucks branches in Panay.

During my fieldwork, Iloilo City's population was slightly less than 448,000 (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016). With an expansive land area of almost 80 square kilometres, it was divided into seven districts: Molo, Jaro, Mandurriao, La Paz, Lapuz, Arevalo, and City Proper (see Map 3). Prior to 1936, however, these



Map I. The Philippines in Southeast Asia. Map designed by Bernardo Arellano III



Map 2. The Philippines and Panay Island. Map designed by Bernardo Arellano III.



Map 3. Iloilo City and nearby towns. Map designed by Bernardo Arellano III.

districts were administratively distinct from one another. In the early years of the Spanish colonial rule, the seat of power in the region was Oton (a town to the west) and then Arevalo, but after the latter was razed in 1614 by Dutch invaders, Iloilo (the present-day City Proper) became the administrative, naval, and missionary centre (Funtecha 1992). Historians point out that Iloilo was originally a fishing village and a marshy swamp full of mangroves. In fact, the flourishing textile industry, the origins of which predated the arrival of the Spanish colonisers, meant that the then independent towns of Molo and Jaro were more prosperous and populated, especially when the Chinese mestizos of these towns began to export textiles in the 18th century (Funtecha 1998).

The opening of the port of Iloilo to direct foreign trade in 1855, the subsequent arrival of foreign merchants and banks (particularly the British), and the eventual growth of the sugar industry in the island of Negros led to the city's prosperity (Aguilar 1994; 1998; McCoy 1982a). Even if, following the decline of the textile industry, a number of Moleño and Jaroeño Chinese *mestizo* families migrated to Negros to establish sugar plantations (*haciendas*), they still maintained mansions in Iloilo; it was also in the city that sugar was stored and shipped, and where the *hacenderos* transacted with their creditors (see Aguilar 1998; Lopez-Gonzaga 1991; and McCoy 1992 for historical accounts of sugar planters in Negros). They also sent some of their children to study in Iloilo, and participated in a life of culture and leisure there.

As Funtecha (1992) has documented, the city from the late 1800s to the 1930s was the site of a vibrant consumer culture that rivalled that of Manila: theatres, social clubs, cinemas, cabarets, department stores, imported cars, gambling houses, and a thriving publishing scene were all present in Iloilo. During this time, it was known as the 'Queen City of the South,' an appellation that stemmed from the 1898 royal decree of the Queen Regent Maria Cristina declaring it as '*la muy noble y leal ciudad*' (most noble and loyal city) after its elites swore allegiance to Spain amidst the revolution of 1896.

However, technological developments that allowed sugar to be milled in Negros and loaded onto ships off the island's coast meant that by the 1920s, Iloilo City could now be bypassed. Labour unrest amongst waterfront workers in that and the

succeeding decades likewise pushed firms to move their operations elsewhere (McCoy 1982a; 1984). After the Second World War, Iloilo's economy languished for many decades, and the city lost its premiere status to rival Visayan cities Cebu and Bacolod (Dizon 1966; Grageda 1966; Vego 1988). Many of the remaining *mestizo* elites moved to Negros, Manila, and even overseas, and in their absence, the city's economy came to be dominated by merchants of Chinese migrant background (but from a much later cohort than those of the elites), and its politics by upwardly-mobile politicians who espoused a populist agenda (Leichter 1975; McCoy 2009 [1993]; Omohundro 1973).



Figure 2. A new motorway and a high-rise building under construction.

Yet, by the time I arrived in Iloilo in early 2014, there was a widespread sense that the city was undergoing renewal due to remittances from overseas workers, but also because of favourable connections between the political elites of Iloilo and Manila. New malls, hotels, and other buildings were being constructed, and new call centres and other BPO firms were being set up. A new motorway was being built, whilst the one connecting the city centre to the new airport (built in a nearby town

some ten years earlier) was being expanded. Meanwhile, the old airport had been sold and was being transformed into a business district. Within and around the city, private housing developments had been sprouting. Politicians, entrepreneurs and investors, economists, and even international commentators expressed optimism that the city was on its way back to prominence (see Padojinog 2007; and other essays in Feleo 2007a; Iloilo Business Club 2011; Yap 2014).

As I have indicated, the district of Molo has had an important place in the history of Iloilo (see Funtecha 2009; Salvilla 2007). Previously known as the *Parían* district, it was where Chinese migrants and those of Chinese descent were required to reside by the Spanish colonial authorities. These residents eventually intermarried with local women (who were usually from the *principalía*, the upper class in the Spanish Philippines) and gave rise to a *mestizo* class that made their fortunes from the trade of textiles and other goods. The Chinese *mestizos* became the elite of Molo and Iloilo, and later, Negros; they also formed part of the Philippines' ruling class. As the *mestizos* had the economic resources, they were able to pay for their children's education both within Molo and outside of it, including Manila and Europe. The number of educational institutions in the area during the Spanish and American colonial periods, and of prominent personalities emanating from it, earned for Molo the tag as 'the Athens of the Philippines' (Salvilla 2007). I return to the *mestizos* in some of the chapters that follow.

For visitors, Molo exudes an old-world charm that tourist organisations and writers have capitalised on (e.g. Chiongson 1990). The district is promoted for its parish church, Saint Anne's, which Dominican friars constructed in 1831. The church is notable for its Gothic-Renaissance style, and for the statues of female saints raised on pedestals attached to its pillars. Outside the church is the town plaza, around which are several old mansions and houses, including one which was built in the 1920s and was purchased by a Manila-based real estate company (discussed in Chapter 1). Whilst touristic representations of Molo emphasise the church and the plaza, absent for reasons that will become apparent shortly is the stretch of coastline that it shares with Arevalo.



Figure 3. St Anne's Church

Along the Molo-Arevalo coastline lies a *baranggay* (village) that I have given the name of Santa Rosa, where I did the bulk of my fieldwork. To the north of the village flow the brackish waters of the Batiano River (actually an estuary), which runs from Oton to its mouth near the Iloilo Fishing Port Complex. A bridge traverses the river and connects the northern portion of Santa Rosa to San Nicolas, another *baranggay*. To the south of the village, and to which the Batiano River ultimately flows, is the Iloilo Strait. From the coast, behind the numerous houses that crowd the foreshore, one could see the island of Guimaras—previously part of Iloilo province but was declared by law as a sub-province in 1966 and a separate province in 1992. To the southeast of Guimaras, in turn, lies the island of Negros.

Classified presently as urban, Santa Rosa was a predominantly agrarian village until the early 1980s. As I describe further in Chapter 1, large tracts of land in the village were owned by a few Moleño- and Jaroeño-Negrense Chinese *mestizo* families who resided elsewhere—a few in Iloilo, most in Negros, and some in Manila and abroad. These tracts of land were tilled by share tenants who remitted to the

landlord up to one half of the produce, depending on the specific arrangements. Most tenants cultivated rice, corn, peanuts, coconut, and vegetables, whilst some took advantage of the nearby river and converted portions of the land into fish ponds. Several residents were employed as farmhands or as coconut sap gatherers. Some derived their livelihood from fishing in the sea or the river; others combined fishing with farm work. At the same time, and presumably because of the village's proximity to the city, as early as the 1920s some residents were employed as carpenters, shoe and slipper makers, and mechanics, but also as drivers and office workers.¹ As I will discuss in later chapters, after the Second World War, more and more residents of the village attended school and university and pursued professional careers.

During its agrarian past, Santa Rosa was considered as a *barrio* (a rural village) or *minurô* (a hamlet or a small village) relative to the town centre of Molo. It did not have its own school until the early 1940s. Neither did it and its surrounding villages have their own parish, which was established only in the 1970s. Instead, a priest would come once a week to celebrate mass. Emblematic of Santa Rosa's and the other coastal villages' marginality is the fact that in the 1933 urban plan drawn by the architect Juan Arellano, the coastal stretch is depicted as an empty space, except for the beginning of the then proposed Molo Boulevard (see Figure 1).

In 2014, there were very few traces of this agrarian past, as only a small portion of land continued to be tilled. Most of the village had already been built up. In fact, Santa Rosa was densely populated, just like the other *baranggays* that lie on the coast of Molo and Arevalo. In the most recent census conducted in 2015, the coastal *baranggays*' combined population of 54,605 composed slightly more than 12 per cent of the city's residents (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016).² To compare, in 1948, the combined population of the *baranggays* was 2,355, or 2.14 per cent of the city's residents (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1951).

The rapid increase in Santa Rosa's and other coastal villages' population can be traced in part to the 1970s. Under the state's land reform programme, it became

¹ Archives Division, Bureau of Records Management (ADBRM) Philippines Civil Registration 1902-1945, Iloilo, Iloilo, Births 1925-1927; Ibid, Births 1928-1931 (all available on-line: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2018411>)

² I do not provide Santa Rosa's specific population figure to minimise the risk of identifiability.

possible for share tenants to acquire up to 3 hectares each of the land that they tilled (see, amongst others, Ledesma 1982; Murray 1972; Putzel 1992). Several of these beneficiaries sold portions of the properties that they had acquired; some mortgaged their landholdings to banks and other creditors, and failed to redeem them. Notably, some of the pre-reform owners also shared the fate of their former tenants. Amongst the lots repossessed by banks, not a few were eventually sold to property developers. Some of the old landowners whose properties were not repossessed nevertheless sold their land to developers, or converted them themselves to housing developments. During my stay in the village, there were a number of housing developments in the village, in addition to a property that had been purchased by an association of informal settlers.

Most of the residents in Santa Rosa were, in fact, informal settlers. Out of the village's total land area of 74 hectares, almost 6.5 hectares were considered as either foreshore land or accretion of the sea. By law, such parcels of land may only be owned by the state. This legal provision made it possible for informal settlers, often with the support of local officials, to build houses on such parcels of land, notwithstanding a 1966 law declaring all publicly-owned land in the coast of Molo as a city park. Informal settlers had likewise built houses along the river, although the coastline was much more populated. Some of the remaining properties of the pre-reform landowners were also occupied by informal settlers.

What allowed informal settlements to flourish in the village was the existence of a pseudo-legal market for 'rights' that encompassed both lawfully titled properties and the untitled foreshore and accretion of the sea. Through this market, a person could purchase the right to occupy an existing house or to build a new one, but without ownership of the land. Deeds of sale and ownership would not be issued, although buyers and sellers of rights would usually sign a document attesting to the transaction, which is signed with *baranggay* officials as witnesses, with the caveat that rights do not equate to ownership.

This market, I was told, developed from the late 1960s after overseers and tenants allowed in-migrants to build houses on the properties of the landlords. These in-migrants moved to Santa Rosa after a number of fires destroyed parts of Iloilo City. Landlords and their overseers took advantage of the situation by securing fees

and annual rent from the in-migrants. For the absentee landlords, renting out the land for residential purposes was the most rational thing to do, as they (or their descendants) were unable or unwilling to attend to the land; agricultural activities were much less profitable, especially compared with their industrial and commercial pursuits elsewhere. Besides, the land reform of the 1970s meant diminished landholdings, and their former tenants no longer worked for them. In turn, earlier in-migrants and other prior residents sold their rights to later and bigger cohorts of in-migrants. *Baranggay* and city officials were thought to have supported the practice of buying and selling rights due to the votes that could be garnered from informal settlers.

One consequence of the decline of agriculture and the increase in population was the transformation of livelihood in Santa Rosa. Increased population meant, amongst other things, the availability of a large pool of workers—mainly men—willing to work in construction, plumbing, and janitorial services, and to do odd jobs. It also meant a profitable market for neighbourhood variety shops (*sari-sari*) and vendors of produce and cooked food. In the course of my fieldwork, I came to know many such shop owners and vendors, mostly women. In fact, I was told that there were probably around 500 shops and eateries in the village. Drivers of jeepneys, tricycles, and *trisikad* (cycle rickshaw) also had a visible presence, as most residents were dependent on these forms of public transportation. Those with some capital established small businesses, including internet cafés, water refilling stations, bakeries, groceries, machine shops, and hardware stores. A large share of residents worked as employees in public and private offices, or were school teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. Some opted to work abroad as seamen, domestic workers, caregivers, but also as nurses. Reflecting the growth of malls, fast foods, and call centres, a small portion of the residents (mostly from the younger age groups) were employed in these industries.

In light of its demographic prominence, Santa Rosa and its neighbouring villages were often imagined by outsiders as areas that needed to be fixed. In such imaginings, the coastal edge was particularly salient. In 1999, for instance, a journalist

described the coastal stretch not only as ‘the biggest garbage dump in Iloilo City,’ but also as the ‘largest collection of squatter colonies’ in the region.³ Commentators often noted the urgency of relocating the informal settlers and rehabilitating the coastal stretch. Moreover, to the extent that the coastal villages of Molo and Arevalo appeared in local news, they often did so in relation to reports of criminality.



Figure 4. Houses along the coast of Molo and Arevalo

I had in fact been warned by a number of friends in Iloilo, mainly of middle- and upper-class standing, that the coastal villages have a reputation not only for having a sizeable number of informal settlers, but also as hotbeds of prostitution, violence, theft, and illegal drug trade. The population density in the area, according to my friends, made it easy for criminals to hide. In addition, I was told that many of the men in the area are alcoholics and could be found drinking by the roadside as

³ <https://groups.google.com/d/msg/alt.language.balita-news/NnNYLZmePIY/6xG3HqLO3KsJ>, accessed 25 September 2016

early as 9 in the morning; many of the women, on the other hand, are either pregnant, attending to infants, or possibly both. Others commented that the area has a considerable population of *agî*—effeminate, transvestite men who are stereotypically identified with lower-class neighbourhood beauty parlours, and beauty pageants (see Cannell 1999: chap. 10; Johnson 1997).



Figure 5. The Iloilo River Esplanade

In many ways, the coastal stretch of Arevalo and Molo represented precisely what the architects and supporters of Iloilo City's renaissance have sought to overcome: dirt, ugliness, disorder, and poverty. To illustrate, a focal point for the urban renewal of Iloilo was the Esplanade along the Iloilo River (Figure 5). Much like Batiano River during my fieldwork, the Iloilo River in the past was lined by shanties; business establishments colonised its banks; and its waters were extremely polluted as the nearby houses and premises used it as a sewage system. By the time of my fieldwork, the informal settlers along its banks had been relocated, and the borders indicated on the old cadastral map had been re-enforced. On one side of the river,

the bank had been transformed into a brick-paved Esplanade lined by trees. Spanning 1.2 kilometres and touted as the longest linear park in the Philippines, the Esplanade was designed by a Filipino landscape architect who worked on the famous Clarke Quay in Singapore. To the minds of many Ilonggos, the Esplanade signified the city's economic revival and even ascent to world-class urbanity (Alcazaren 2013; Burgos 2012; Drilon 2014).

It was the Esplanade that some commentators sought to replicate along both the Batiano River and the coast of Molo and Arevalo. The city government, in fact, had already identified and profiled the households living along the banks of the Batiano River and who would be relocated to a housing site. In Santa Rosa, there were 62 such households. Meanwhile, the village council of Santa Rosa had passed a resolution prohibiting the construction of new structures along the shoreline. The city government supported the resolution and encouraged the other coastal *baranggays* to pass similar declarations. There were rumours too during my fieldwork that the city government would soon widen the boulevard into a four-lane (or possibly wider) motorway. Villagers were anticipating the arrival of the bulldozers, but by the time I left the field, these were nowhere in sight.

Despite its image amongst middle- and upper-class Ilonggos as an impoverished, overpopulated, and dirty *baranggay*, I found Santa Rosa to be a productive place from where to think about the entanglements of kinship, personhood, social mobility, and middle-classness. It telescoped for me the history of class formation in Iloilo and the Philippines, including the rise and eventual decline of the landed elite. More importantly, it shed light on the emergence of upwardly mobile and aspirational middle classes in the post-War decades and their consolidation and expansion since the 1980s.

The ethnographic path

My account is based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted between January 2014 and March 2015, and supplemented by a two-week return visit in December 2015. When I first arrived in Iloilo, I did so with no specific field site in

mind. At that time too, I was expecting to pursue a different research project. The contingencies of fieldwork, however, led me to reformulate my project, especially given the kind of field site that ultimately became available to me.

From January to February 2014, I studied Hiligaynon, the language spoken in the city and immediate surrounding towns, Western Negros, and parts of central Mindanao. It is considered as the *lingua franca* in Western Visayas. Part of the Western Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian linguistic family, it is one of the 135 to 175 Philippine languages (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino 2016). It is also known for its gentle and affectionate-sounding lilt, earning a reputation for Ilonggos as loving and caring (Fernandez 1973). Having been born, raised, and educated in Luzon, it was by and large alien to me. Its grammatical features and the borrowed Spanish words that it shared with Rinconada Bikol (one of the languages I grew up with) made it somewhat less daunting to learn. In the end, language tuition enabled me to understand and participate in (simple) everyday conversations, and to read written texts with the help of a dictionary. The people I worked with—particularly the younger ones, those who attended school and university, and those who regularly watched television programmes broadcasted from Manila—had a very good command of Tagalog, the language spoken in the national capital and the country's *lingua franca*. Particularly during the start of fieldwork, they spoke to me in Tagalog, usually unless they were emotionally agitated. As with most educated Filipinos, it was also common for them to code-switch, a practice that I participated in (see Chapter 3).

In March 2014, through the help of local contacts, I came to know of the village that I have given the name of Santa Rosa. Local contacts introduced me to village officials and several neighbourhood leaders. They later became some of my first participants. They also recommended kin, neighbours, and other villagers who might be interested in sharing their lives and thoughts with me. Inevitably, this meant that a significant portion of my initial contacts and interlocutors were of some importance within the village (e.g. elected officials or community leaders, or members of families recognised as old-timers or as exemplars of success).

One way in which I expanded the set of people I knew was by asking my initial set of friends to introduce me to the other villagers whom they referred to in

their accounts. This was a request that was granted most of the time. I asked them too about and sometimes introduced myself to their neighbours and people who were passing by, visiting, or simply standing outside my initial friends' houses. Meanwhile, I met some of my other interlocutors through chance encounters in neighbourhood shops or the village office—the latter, especially so during the early days of my fieldwork. I also sought the views of other figures—not necessarily residents—who played a role in the village, such as teachers who lived elsewhere but were assigned to the state school in Santa Rosa.

Since my access to the field and the selection of my initial interlocutors were dependent on local networks, this meant that some residents of Santa Rosa who were not connected to these networks were difficult, if not impossible to speak with. In particular, because my access to the village was partly through the village head, his main political rivals made it clear that they did not wish to be included in the research. Similarly, non-kin, non-friends, and especially enemies of my initial contacts were less accessible to me than those who had largely positive ties with my initial contacts.

Throughout my stay in Santa Rosa, but especially so in the first half, I took a broad and open-ended approach to fieldwork, aiming to talk with as many residents as I could. I sought to converse with residents regarding the village's history and their own familial histories and personal biographies. Although I had topics in mind, these initial conversations were generally unstructured and open-ended. Particularly in relation to families considered as old-timers, I collected genealogical information. Whenever there were community events, such as *baranggay* meetings, wakes, birthday celebrations, seminars, and religious festivities, I made it a point to be present. Those events introduced me to members of the community and allowed me to know more residents whom I would eventually interview.

At the end of fieldwork, I had spoken to more than 200 residents of Santa Rosa, most of them belonging to 6 or 7 old-timer families. As I explain in the succeeding chapters, most of these families intermarried, thus constituting a vast kinship network. I also spoke to villagers who did not belong to these families, mostly those who migrated to Santa Rosa in the 1980s and later decades. The majority of those I worked with were women, although I did get to know male residents,

including merchant seamen who had just concluded their contracts or were waiting for their next assignments. Most of the people I came to know had some university education or were graduates, and were working as employees or were engaged in small businesses. I likewise spoke to some of those who belonged to poorer households and who were informal settlers—laundrywomen, pedicab drivers, itinerant vendors, and beauticians, amongst others. Age-wise, most of my interlocutors were in their 40s and 50s, although I also came to know a number of children, teenagers, young adults, and the elderly.

When I commenced fieldwork in Santa Rosa, I had already secured a small flat in another district of the city. Thus, from March to June 2014, I commuted almost every day to Santa Rosa in the morning, and would return to my flat in the late afternoon or early evening. I would normally spend the morning in the village office, observing people go about their transactions, and identifying possible research participants. During this initial period, I conducted most interviews in the afternoon, when my interviewees were done with household chores. Weekends too were particularly busy for me, as these were the only time to speak with residents with regular jobs.

Commuting to my field site meant, however, that I was constrained in so far as observing everyday life in the village. I sought to remedy this constraint in several ways. To begin with, I arranged to have lunch with a family—that of the village head's distant kin, a classificatory aunt—each time I was in the village. This arrangement allowed me to have an initial base within Santa Rosa and provided me with a glimpse of the domestic and everyday lives of its residents.

In late June 2014, just before the onset of the monsoon season, I arranged with another family, which had recently expanded their house, to let me use one of their spare rooms whenever I had interviews or some other research activities that extended late at night (e.g. a wake), or which started early the following morning. Gradually, I spent more time in the village even when I had no scheduled interviews, although I would still go to my flat, especially when fieldwork became emotionally difficult. During those days when I would stay in the spare room, I would spend the morning having breakfast and conversing with my hosts and their neighbours, sometimes for hours. I would then spend some time writing my field notes before

going to the village office or to an interviewee's house. I would have lunch at the laundrywoman's food stall, or at the city if I were on an errand or if I just needed a brief break from the field. In the afternoon, I would conduct more interviews. At night, after dinner, I would often join my hosts in watching television or a film disc.

I became much more incorporated into village life after one of my key informants fell ill in October 2014 and eventually passed away three months later at the age of 95. Lola Ising, who I introduced at the beginning of this Introduction, was originally referred to me by the village captain as a prospective research participant, for several reasons. She was, at that time, the oldest resident of the village, and was in a position to shed light on the village's history. Their family, the Mahilways, was also considered as an exemplar in terms of achieving social mobility. Lola Ising and her deceased husband were share tenants, but were able to send their children to university. In addition, their family was one of the few in the village who eventually came to own parcels of land under the state's land reform programme.

Prior to Lola Ising's illness, I had been drawn to the Mahilways partly because of the richness of the stories that she and her children shared with me. They were also very hospitable, always insisting that I eat whenever I came round. There was also affinity arising from the fact that I was raised by my maternal grandmother after my mother, a single parent, left for the UK in the late 1980s to do her MSc. Having grown up in the presence of grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins in another Philippine province somehow made connections easier to establish.

After news of Lola Ising's hospitalisation circulated, I began to visit her and her family more often, both at the hospital and at their house in Santa Rosa. When she passed away in December 2014, I was often at the wake, where I would usually be introduced, partly in jest, as her adopted grandson. After her funeral, her children would often insist that I stay in their house. Thus, for the remainder of my main fieldwork, I spent most of my time with the Mahilways. When I visited the field in December 2015, I stayed with the family, who made it clear that I ought to be around for the anniversary of Lola Ising's death, when the mourning period would officially end. During these periods, I would only leave the Mahilways' house if I needed to interview other residents or to consult one of the local archives, or if the family itself would go to the mall or grocery.

Having a room in the village and becoming incorporated into a family allowed me to gain a more intimate picture of the lives of the people of Santa Rosa. My conversations with them took place increasingly outside of the interview context, and more within the flow of their everyday lives. Especially in relation to those that I got to know well, becoming absorbed into the village provided me with a vantage point to see continuities between the narratives that they shared with me and the unfolding of their lives, but also discontinuities, omissions, and contradictions.

In addition to the people I spoke with in the village, I also consulted individuals outside of Santa Rosa. They helped me gain a picture not only of the village's history and reputation, but also of Iloilo City, more generally. These individuals included local historians and academics, city officials, civil servants, journalists, educators, entrepreneurs, and bankers. In early March 2014, I attended an investors' forum in Manila, and this allowed me to have a glimpse of the aspirations and understandings that underpinned the city's economy—primarily those articulated by its political and economic elites.

Moreover, to have a better grasp of Santa Rosa's and Iloilo's historical trajectories, I supplemented my ethnographic fieldwork with archival and documentary research. Within the village, I consulted extant files kept at the state school. These files provided information regarding schooling in the post-Second World War era. Outside the village, I examined land titles available at the city's land registry office, as well as cadastral maps and survey information kept by the local branch of the land management office. I likewise went through files pertaining to properties in the village that were kept at the city assessor's office. Together, these documents allowed me to gain a picture of the history of land ownership and inheritance in Santa Rosa and nearby areas. I also appraised development plans and reports of the city government.

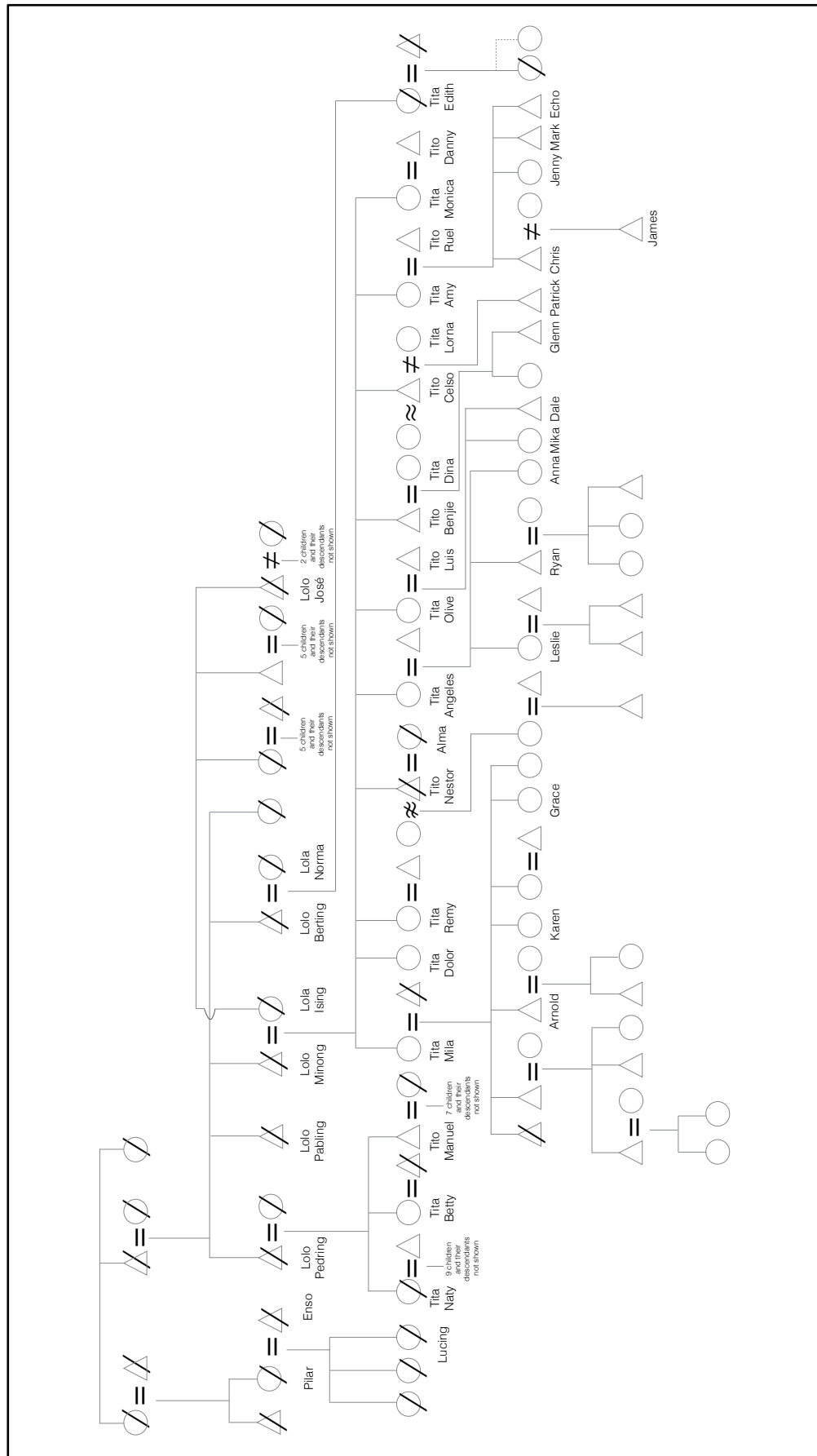
In addition to libraries of local universities, I consulted the Mejica Museum, where copies of American- and Japanese-era local newspapers and other documents were kept. These materials were rich sources for the history of Molo and Iloilo. I likewise made use of the yearbooks and other records stored at the archives of the John B Lacson Memorial Foundation University, which shed light on the history of

the merchant navy in Santa Rosa and elsewhere in Iloilo, a theme that I discuss in some of this thesis's chapters.

Finally, I consider myself fortunate as technological developments in recent years, particularly efforts at digitising archival materials, have made it possible for me to access materials kept in various collections within and outwith the Philippines. The digital repositories that I have consulted include those of Michigan, Wisconsin-Madison, and Cornell universities (renowned North American centres of Southeast Asian and Philippine studies), the National Library of the Philippines, the Biblioteca Nacional de España, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These repositories house colonial documents and historical accounts, as well as civil registry information that shed light on the historical demography of the village and the genealogical links of some of its residents. Due to time and resource constraints, the archival research that I have done remains preliminary. The repositories that I have mentioned, for instance, have not digitised and uploaded their whole collections. In both Iloilo and Manila, I have not exhausted local archives and sources. I intend to do more historical research in the future.

Writing lives

As indicated above, I have chosen to write this thesis in a manner that remains close to my interlocutors' experiences and accounts whilst being mindful of the broader contexts involved. Specifically, I have foregrounded in my account one particular family—the Mahilways—and their stories and experiences. In the succeeding chapters, I trace the family's ascent to middle-classness and their kinship history. I have done so in large part due to the way my fieldwork unfolded, including how the very questions and themes that animate this thesis emerged mainly through my engagement with the family. My decision to do so was also an ethical one: to recognise and value the difficulties that they faced in living their lives, and the generosity with which they shared their personal biographies and family history. The Mahilways (and indeed, the other people I worked with in Santa Rosa) did not become part of my research through a probability sampling frame, as the preceding



section makes clear. In a strict statistical sense, they are not to be considered as representative of the upwardly mobile or the middle classes in Iloilo and the Philippines. Yet, the family's history is consistent with patterns established by sociologists and demographers (see C. Bautista 2001*a*). Like a significant proportion of those considered as having a middle-class standing in the present-day Philippines, older generations of the Mahilways derived their livelihood from agriculture, but post-Second World War generations moved into professional occupations, and in doing so, migrated to Manila and other urban centres, and later, overseas. In a qualitative sense, therefore, the stories and experiences of the Mahilways are illustrative of widely-shared patterns in the Philippines.

In placing the Mahilways at front and centre, I have drawn inspiration from other anthropologists who have endeavoured to foreground in their accounts particular persons and their relations. There are several precursors I could cite here, including much earlier ones, such as those of Lewis (see, for example, 1950; 1961; see also Melhuus 1997 for a sympathetic account), notwithstanding his problematic theoretical claims, but also more recent ones, such as Lambek's (2011) long-term engagement with a sibling set in Mayotte, Biehl's (2013*a* [2005]; 2013*b*) accounts of a key interlocutor, and Angela Garcia's (2014; 2016) ongoing work with a woman and her mother and her daughter. There too is the life-history and biographical tradition within anthropology, including recent work on Southeast Asia (e.g. Behar 1993; Narayan 2007; Waterson 2007; see also Zeitlyn 2008 for a recent account).

What I take from these precursors is the insight that by attending to specific lives, anthropologists gain a picture of how persons, both as individuals and as part of ongoing relationships, navigate various social worlds, sustain them in some ways, and transform them in others. At the same time, accounts of specific persons and families are not just about them. Not only do they imply other persons and families, but lives are always already embedded in other and broader relations and institutions. Moreover, personal and familial lives bear the marks of historical and extra-local events, although such marks may be obscured by the rhythms of everyday life (Das 2007: 11), or underplayed by individuals and their kin.

In what follows, I have sought to trace the links between the intimate and wider social life in a number of ways. As will become clear, although I foreground

one family in my account, I also refer to other individuals and families. In various places, I compare the Mahilways' narratives and experiences with those of their neighbours and fellow villagers. I have also sought to expand the horizon of my account by incorporating historical and demographic materials, and by drawing from the archives of Philippine and Southeast Asian studies. I have also taken the liberty of melding the experiences and stories of some of my other interlocutors with those of the Mahilways, which has allowed me to reflect broader patterns without losing narrative focus and intimacy.

Using composite characters and stories not only allowed me to incorporate other villagers into my account. It also made the identity of the people I worked with less obvious. In some places, I have deliberately omitted or changed some of the details to protect the privacy of my informants, especially where disputes, medical conditions, and legal issues were involved. More generally, throughout the thesis, I use pseudonyms based on names that were in use in Iloilo. The only exception is when I refer to public and historical figures. As I have noted above, names of some places have been changed, and I have refrained from providing details that would make it easy to identify the village. I am aware that by using pseudonyms and composite accounts and characters, questions may be raised regarding the veracity of the thesis. I am convinced, however, that the truthfulness of an ethnography need not be determined solely by its fidelity to facts, by also by its ability to evoke how people live their lives in specific historical and cultural circumstances.

Finally, I refer to people in ways that indicate how I related to them during fieldwork. I have already mentioned that I was considered as one of the Mahilway grandchildren. I thus use 'Lola' (grandmother) when referring to Lola Ising, and 'Tita' or 'Tito' (aunt or uncle) when writing about her children, and, with some exceptions noted throughout the chapters, their cousins and their spouses. When referring to the other grandchildren, I have chosen to mention them by name. I do this because many of them were either my age-mates, younger than me, or only slightly older. To the extent that my younger classificatory cousins referred to me as their *manong* (older brother or cousin), I have reflected this in the relevant passages. I have likewise elected to refer to the Mahilways and the other people who appear in my account using nicknames—not their own for privacy reasons, but using those that

were in use in Iloilo and the Philippines. I should note that during fieldwork, I addressed my older interlocutors using the appropriate kinship term (usually those for mother/father or aunt/uncle), and once we became comfortable with one another, in combination with their nickname.

Preview of the chapters

I begin in Chapter 1 with a consideration of inheritance disputes. This stems from a view espoused by my Ilonggo friends, but which finds resonance elsewhere in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, that adult siblings are prone to conflicts after the death of parents, especially where property is involved. Here, siblingship has a fragile quality, and is mediated by parents, as well as non-human elements, particularly land. For my interlocutors, however, land ownership was a fairly recent development owing to the history I sketched above. As such, it was intertwined with class moralities differentiating the ostensibly successful middle classes from the unpropertied lower classes, the now-vanished landed elite who supposedly squandered their fortunes, and those who aspired for upward mobility but failed. Land, in this sense, was fundamental to maintaining familial identities and reputations. It was also key to distinctions between old-timers and newcomers. This power of land, however, was steadily more under pressure due to the increased economic value of real estate, the decline of the agrarian economy, and internal and transnational migration. Moreover, the material that I consider suggests that instead of generating new conflicts amongst siblings, the inheritance of land amplified existing ones, and activated memories of siblingship and projects of mobility.

In Chapter 2, I discuss how education was central to journeys of social mobility and aspirations to middle-classness. This was particularly true for those who came of age in the immediate decades after the Second World War, when more education opportunities became available to a larger section of the population. Education was spoken of as an inheritance, a superior alternative to land due to its inalienability and impartibility. It was seen as a means through which parents may redeem themselves through their children whilst bequeathing the latter with an

elevated sense of personhood. As an inheritance, it involved parental control, as well as active participation from would-be heirs, often framed in terms of enduring everyday difficulties. Amongst siblings, especially older ones, it called for sacrifices, such as delayed or foregone educational and marital opportunities. Inability or unwillingness to conform to such expectations led to frayed ties amongst siblings and between children and their parents. However, in framing education as an inheritance, the people I spoke with in Santa Rosa also understated the extent to which educational success depended on a relatively privileged access to land.

Since the pursuit of education was tightly linked to professional opportunities, I discuss in Chapter 3 how teaching was the most accessible profession, especially for the women who went to university in the 1950s and 1960s. A career as a school teacher was the easiest route to middle class respectability, authority, and economic stability. Siblings who became teachers were described as constituting a lineage, and were considered as embodying unbroken and cumulative success. At the same time, the pursuit of teaching careers was linked to desires to craft autonomy in relation to parents and other older kin. Such a desire, however, was complicated by the need to rely on ties of kinship and patronage in securing teaching posts. Moreover, the pursuit of teaching careers sometimes led to the reinforcement of hierarchies based on age and birth order. In other instances, a career as a school teacher sometimes led to sentiments of intellectual and moral superiority relative to peers and kin. At the extreme, such sentiments were seen as leading to unrealistic marriage preferences that, in some cases, meant unwelcome dependence on younger siblings and their children in old age.

Projects of social mobility and middle-classness entailed migration: at first internal, and eventually, transnational. This is vivid in the case of health professions, especially nursing, which obtained significance starting in the 1980s. Chapter 4 describes the pursuit of health professions in migratory contexts. Such a pursuit was experienced in part as a means of asserting autonomy and difference from older siblings who had pursued established routes to social mobility and middle-classness, such as teaching. It was also articulated in terms of furthering projects of upward mobility. The pursuit of these professions, the migratory moves they entailed, and most importantly, the foreign remittances they enabled, generated new expectations

and responsibilities. Relations amongst siblings were reconfigured, and at times, hierarchies based on age and birth order were reversed. Yet, these transformations came with risks, including unreasonable and unbidden demands from siblings, and not being adequately recognised, remembered, and reciprocated.

Chapter 5 foregrounds the gendered aspects of upward mobility and middle-classness by discussing the place of male siblings in these projects. It focusses on how men's failure to live up to expectations of upward mobility were elided, or were explained in terms that depicted men as less likely to succeed educationally and professionally. It likewise describes one route popular amongst men in Santa Rosa and other parts of Iloilo and Panay—merchant seamanship—and how this was rejected by the more ambitious. Finally, it brings to light how men's successful pursuit of middle-classness was intertwined with gendered expectations regarding mobility and responsibilities to families of birth, most especially after marriage. One consequence of the convergence of gendered professions, mobilities, and familial responsibilities was the comparatively weaker ties of brothers to their families of origin.

The centrality of migration to middle class projects highlighted the increased importance of the question of who will take care of parents in their old age. Adult children faced expectations to look after their elderly parents as a way of repaying debts of gratitude. Amongst siblings, however, the responsibility of parental care was often given to younger sisters, especially those who did not have a flourishing professional career or who had remained in the natal house. Chapter 6 thus focusses on the burdens of care and how this was experienced by the people I worked with. Such burdens had consequences not only for the sibling given the responsibility to care for their parents, but even for that sibling's children. Consequently, the death of a parent may be an opportunity to contest with varying degrees of success the distribution of responsibilities amongst siblings.

In Chapter 7, I examine the intergenerational consequences of projects of upward mobility and middle-classness. I shift my focus to the children of those born between the late 1930s and 1950s. This later generation's ties of cousinship, but also their relations with their aunts and uncles were overshadowed by their parents' relations with their own siblings. Despite efforts to stand apart from the enmities

afflicting the ascending generation, these children were often implicated. Similarly, their actions and perceived failures were reflected back on their parents, with injurious effects on relations between siblings in the ascending generation. Material inequalities amongst siblings in one generation likewise shaped the tone of relations in the next. Finally, the geographical dispersal pursued by the post-war generation and the smaller sizes of their families meant that cousinship in the next generation was less extensive and prominent than in previous generations.

In the Conclusion, I revisit the main themes and key arguments of this thesis and highlight the broader implications of my account.



Figure 7. An elderly man posing with children, 1907-1916. University of Wisconsin-Madison Philippines Image Collection

Chapter I

The values of land:

Sibling conflicts, a parent's death, and the economy of property

‘It’s good that the land’s been subdivided,’ Tita Amy said, almost whispering, her hand wrapped around my arm. She said this as we walked to the jeepney stop. It was the day I first met her, her mother Lola Ising, and her sister Tita Dolor. From their family compound, it took Tita Amy and me less than five minutes to reach the stop. Along the way, and whilst waiting for a jeepney that would take me to the city centre, she narrated how, earlier that year, the family’s one-hectare lot in Santa Rosa had been partitioned into ten—one each for her self and her siblings and for their mother. ‘It’s better this way,’ she continued. ‘Our mother’s already 95 years old,’ she explained, foreshadowing Lola Ising’s demise several months later.

After pausing briefly, Tita Amy went on to say that there were plans too to sell the family’s six-hectare farmland in San Antonio, a village in a neighbouring town, to a Manila-based real estate developer. ‘Good thing if it’s just me and my siblings.’ She posed rhetorically: ‘What if the in-laws and their children show interest and meddle? That’s going to be a big problem, right?’ Selling the farmland was thus meant to avert conflict in the family. Sounding like an anthropologist, she posited that such conflicts are in a way unavoidable: siblings, once married, shift their priorities to their own families. ‘It’s the cycle of life,’ she said with a tired smile, whilst shaking her head slowly.

It is thus with land that I begin my account of kinship, personhood, social mobility, and middle-classness in the Philippines. In this chapter, I discuss the role of land as an inheritance, in mediating kinship ties, especially filiation and siblingship. As I demonstrate below, land was central to how the manifold relations of the people I worked with were crafted, maintained, transformed, and even severed; it was also key to the production and cultivation of a sense of identity and belonging that simultaneously implied hierarchical relations.

In its entanglements with human relations, land served to demarcate exclusions and distinctions, whilst also bridging them, such as those between landowners and peasants, and tenants and farmworkers, and those deemed responsible and irresponsible, and successful and unsuccessful. Although these demarcations at times corresponded to the border between kin and non-kin, at other times, these demarcations were held amongst kinsfolk. Moreover, as these demarcations indicate, land worked in several registers, including material and moral, the economic and the intimate, and at least in so far as the people of Santa Rosa were concerned, it brought these regions of life together.

At the same time, land anchored relations within broader histories and temporalities. Land enabled relations in the past to cast their shadows on those in the present; it also summoned memories of ongoing ties. Likewise, through it, broader histories of power shaped my interlocutors' lives and relations. The value of land itself changed over time: from a possession owned by a select and powerful few, to being a remnant of a bygone agrarian past, and to a potential source of financial gain amidst an ongoing economic boom. Shifts in land's value had repercussions for its place in and the pressures it brought to bear on people's relationships.

By attending to how land mediated relations, histories, and temporalities, I seek in this chapter to contribute to a broadening of the anthropological understanding of inheritance to include how notions, forms, and practices of inheritance are reworked over time, and how they are entangled with both continuities and ruptures (A. Garcia 2014). Notably, within the anthropological literature on the Philippines and island Southeast Asia, inheritance figures to differentiate kinship in the region from that in, say, South Asia (e.g. Dube 1997; Ward 1963). Consistent with the relative symmetry and complementarity between men and women observed in the region, both sons and daughters in many island Southeast Asian societies tend to inherit from their parents. At the same time, just like Tita Amy above, these accounts highlight how inheritance and the disputes it triggers tend to be injurious to ties of siblingship (Aguilar *et al.* 2009: 139-41; Cannell 1999: 142; Carsten 1990; 1997: 96-102).

The material that I discuss here directs attention to how land's capacity to cause breaches in relations was shaped by wider forces, including the state and the

market, and its own history as a transmissible property. As will become evident, the availability of land as an inheritance for my friends in Santa Rosa was a relatively recent development that occurred after they had embarked on journeys of social mobility. That is, their becoming middle class largely occurred despite not having owned transmissible land, albeit, as we will see in this and succeeding chapters, those who had access to land had a clear advantage over those who did not. As such, the people who figure in this account viewed ownership of land with ambivalence, in so far as it was associated with histories of elite formation and dispossession. Yet, precisely because of projects of upward mobility, land became more valuable and its potential for enmity more pronounced.

Finally, whilst the inheritance of land is often seen as generating ruptures in relations, the stories and experiences I encountered in the field suggest another possibility. For those I came to know, such ruptures had, in fact, been long in the making, and the passing on of land brought them to the surface. Land, in this sense, crystallised and amplified enmities that had been simmering under the surface of everyday life.

A prescient knowledge

Tita Amy, it turned out, was right. After their mother's passing in December 2014, land became a source of tensions for her and her siblings. Contrary to Lola Ising's wishes, the farmland in San Antonio remained unsold as her illness and subsequent demise overtook the plan to sell it. Indeed, by the time I left the field in March 2015, and even when I returned for a brief visit in December of that year, the sale of the farmland had yet to materialise.

Hospital and funeral expenses—most of them unpaid—generated considerable pressure for the family to sell the farm. For 50-odd days, 30 of which were spent in the ICU and the rest in a private room, Lola Ising was confined in a private hospital known not just for its high standards, but also expensive services. Although Lola Ising could have been brought somewhere less expensive, that choice of hospital appeared to have been commonsense for the family. In Iloilo and

elsewhere in the Philippines, private hospitals vastly outnumbered those run by the state, and the latter were generally thought of as having fewer resources and thus offering services of lesser quality. Moreover, the Mahilways' image as having successfully achieved upward mobility, which I discuss in the following chapters, meant that there were expectations within the family, but also in the community, that only the best healthcare available was suitable. When Lola Ising died in early December 2015, the hospital bill, including fees for the doctors, had reached more than 2 million pesos (approx. £28,600).¹

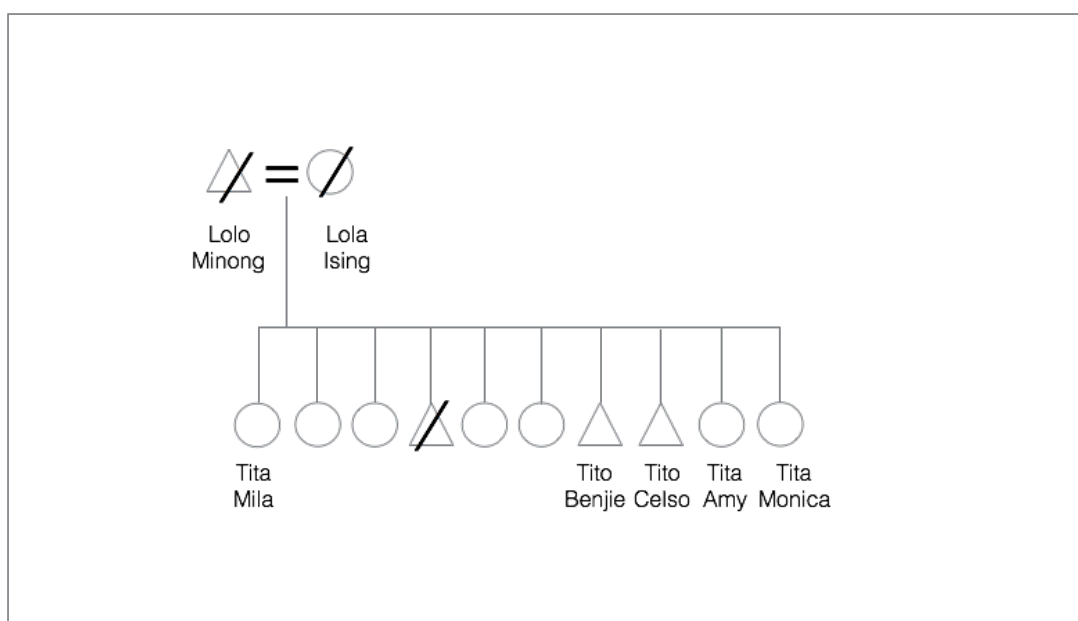


Figure 8. Principal participants in the land dispute

The wake and the funeral also entailed considerable expenses. The casket chosen by Tita Monica, the youngest of the siblings and a nurse who had been based in the US, was one of the more expensive ones. As I describe more fully in Chapter 4, the choice of the casket was partly in anticipation of how the family would be perceived by others. Moreover, as the wake was held for nine nights in the Mahilway's main house, to allow Tita Monica and other overseas kin to arrive, this meant that the family had to spend on the food and beverages served to visitors. On

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, equivalences between Philippine peso and pound sterling are based on an exchange rate of 70 pesos to £1.

the day of the funeral itself, the family had to prepare lunch for the 300 or so attendees. They also had to provide snacks (hamburgers from Jollibee, a popular fast food chain, and Coke) to those who returned to the house from the cemetery.

These expenses were considerable, so much so that even when Lola Ising was still in the hospital, there was already talk of reviving the plan to sell the farmland. Those who did not or were unable to contribute to Lola Ising's daily expenses in the hospital, mostly medicines and other consumables, relied on Tita Monica and Tita Amy to cover for them. 'We'll just replace their money once the land is sold,' one of them explained to me. 'So long as our mother's life is prolonged,' another added.

So, it was Tita Amy who paid for the expenses for the first few days of Lola Ising's hospitalisation; their brother Tito Benjie did so for the next three or four days; and Tita Monica covered the expenses that were incurred during the three weeks that she was in Iloilo. When Tita Monica briefly returned to New York, Tita Amy once more took responsibility for the expenses. She also paid for the private nurses who looked after Lola Ising around the clock after the transfer to a private room. Meanwhile, doctors' fees and non-consumable expenses were charged to their room account. Although Tita Monica and Tita Amy paid a small portion of these expenses, the bulk remained unpaid. Moreover, as I learnt later, both Tita Monica and Tita Amy had to take out loans for them to be able to pay for some of the expenses. Tita Monica borrowed money from her retirement fund, whilst a maternal cousin agreed to lend money in exchange for the right to till half of the land in San Antonio, which Tita Amy had been farming since the 1990s (see Chapter 6).

Along with the pressures of unpaid debt, the siblings' desire to sell the farm also stemmed from the aggressiveness of the real estate developer. Although the developer started in the early 2000s with a mere 4-hectare acquisition, its landholding had since expanded to 12 hectares by 2010 and to more than 500 hectares by the end of my fieldwork. One of the biggest developers in the Philippines, it sought to build a sprawling planned and self-contained residential community. This massive development was a response to the economic boom of Iloilo, which as I discussed at the beginning of this thesis, was partly underpinned by remittances sent by overseas Ilonggos, mainly merchant seafarers, but also domestic workers, and professionals. This and other real estate developments in Iloilo targeted migrants and their families,

not least with the help of banks that offer housing loans payable in many years' time. Notably, the Mahilways' farmland was one of the two remaining unconverted holdings in the area, as the developer had already purchased most of the surrounding farms, including those of their maternal cousin, who, as I have mentioned, extended a loan to Tita Amy.

In January 2015, led by Tita Monica and with the help of a family friend, a solicitor, the siblings re-initiated negotiations with the developer for an acceptable price. At the start of my fieldwork, the developer offered to buy the Mahilways' farmland for 30 million pesos, but Lola Ising wanted a price of 60 million pesos. She was waiting for a higher offer when illness struck in October 2014. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I learnt that the developer's offer increased to somewhere between 48 and 54 million pesos (approx. £685,000 to £772,000).

All the siblings, except for Tito Celso, who was based in Manila, supported the plan to sell the farm. 'Don't let the fruits of our parents' toil disappear,' he exhorted his siblings through text messages. He refused to sign papers that would allow the sale to proceed, and soon enough, text messages conveyed threats of a lawsuit. 'We'll see each other in court if you go on with your plans,' his siblings quoted him as saying. Despite this threat, negotiations with the developer continued. Should the sale push through, Tito Celso's siblings told me, they would leave just a portion of the farm for him.

Tito Celso's objection to the sale was received negatively by his siblings, particularly Tita Amy and Tita Monica. Did he, his siblings asked, expect the two to pay for the hospital debt? Had not these two assisted him previously when he was in dire need? It certainly did not help that Tito Celso failed to visit Lola Ising in the hospital and only briefly appeared at the wake the night before the funeral. His ties with his siblings had also been frayed owing to his separation from his wife who continued to live in the family compound, and whose side, he thought, his siblings took. There too was his rather unorthodox professional trajectory, which, in many ways, was a source of embarrassment for the family. In fact, prior to his mother's death, he had not been home to Santa Rosa for seven years. I bracket these issues for now and revisit them in Chapter 5, but suffice it to say for the moment that the land issue built on and served to exacerbate this history of enmity.

Other cracks became visible too. Tita Amy revealed that at one point, the daughter and son-in-law of Tita Mila, their oldest sibling, visited the farm, and asked the farmhands where the portion registered under Tita Mila's name was. As I will describe below, when the family acquired the farmland in the 1970s, half of it (or 3 hectares) had to be registered in Tita Mila's name for strategic reasons. Some of Tita Mila's siblings suspected that the visit was prompted by their sister's interest in the land. They emphasised that Tita Mila had nothing to do with the purchase of the land, and that she, in fact, failed to abide by expectations to help them in the past with their education expenses, and therefore did not help in achieving the family's dream of upward mobility, for she married soon after graduating from university (see Chapter 2). Tita Amy, however, successfully pre-empted Tita Mila's perceived design when she retrieved a copy of a document from the 1970s indicating that the land was only being held in trust by Tita Mila for their parents.

When negotiations with the real estate company were restarted after Lola Ising's death, some of the siblings who had earlier promised to repay Tita Amy and Tita Monica were no longer keen to do so. They reasoned that the hospital and funeral expenses should be taken from their mother's share of the proceeds of the sale. Prior to their mother's death, the plan was, following the New Civil Code of the Philippines, to divide the proceeds into ten equal shares, as was done with the lot in Santa Rosa. At that time, the farmland was still registered under the name of Lola Ising and her husband, Lolo Minong, who passed away in the 1980s. However, Lola Ising made it known that her share in both properties should revert after her death to Tita Monica.

In response to this turn of events, Tita Amy and Tita Monica claimed that some of their siblings were rather cunning: they wanted their share of the sale intact, but barely contributed to their mother's upkeep when she was still alive. At one point, Tita Amy wondered if she and Tita Monica should come up with a list of all that they had ever spent and done for their mother so that their other siblings would realise how overburdened the two of them had been—the hospital and funeral expenses just being the latest in a series of obligations. As I detail in the succeeding chapters, the pursuit of educational and professional opportunities, as well as marriages, led most of the Mahilway siblings away from Santa Rosa.

For the most part, it was Tita Monica who provided for Lola Ising by sending money from the US, hence the latter's decision to convey her share of both properties to the former. As will become clearer later in the thesis, Tita Monica was already nearing retirement, hence the refusal of her siblings to share in their mother's expenses had potential implications for her old age. The bitterness of the situation for Tita Monica was amplified by the fact that she had spent most of her professional life as a nurse supporting her siblings and their children; in consequence, her own marriage had been considerably delayed (see Chapter 4).

Meanwhile, as I discuss in Chapter 6, it was Tita Amy who looked after their mother's everyday needs. Indeed, her exclusive use of the farm was partly in recognition of her caring responsibilities within the family. It also signalled being stuck at home in Santa Rosa and with agriculture at a time when professional careers and geographical mobility were valorised. Her having to pawn half of the farmland was thus particularly poignant as it built on a history marked by abandoned aspirations, compelled immobility, and financial strains.

The tensions that arose due to the farmland's planned sale became a source of regret for Tita Amy. If only, she said many times, they were able to sell the land before Lola Ising's death. This often led her to say that their mother knew just what sort of trouble the land would bring once she passed on. It was for this reason, Tita Amy said, that their mother had insisted that aside from selling the farmland, the lot in Santa Rosa should be subdivided. Lola Ising pushed Tita Amy to set in motion the process of partitioning and to bring it to completion. Consistent with her responsibilities in the family, Tita Amy had to pay for the fees of lawyers, land surveyors, and registry officials that allowed the partitioning of the lot to be expedited.

With hindsight, Tita Amy considered Lola Ising's insistence that the land in Santa Rosa be partitioned and her intention to sell the farmland in San Antonio as modalities of parenting and care—these were their mother's ways of minimising, if not totally avoiding the possibly corrosive effects on siblingship of inherited land. In fact, for Tita Amy and some of her siblings, the land issue also evoked memories of their father, Lolo Minong. When Tita Amy and her siblings were younger, and when the family were still sharecroppers (see below), Lolo Minong would often tell them

that he would not have land to pass on to them, and even if he did, it would just be a cause of conflict amongst them.

This picture of land as something that endangers ties amongst sisters and brothers was something shared by the Mahilways with other (often older) residents of Santa Rosa who I came to know. Parents were, to begin with, thought of as a force that unifies sibling sets; their demise (especially of both the mother and the father) was considered as potentially weakening ties of siblingship. In this spirit, and resonating with similar botanic images of relations and origins in Southeast Asia and the wider Austronesian world (see Errington 1989: 215; J.J. Fox 2006a [1996]; 2006b [1997]), parents were often likened to the strings that bind together dried midribs of coconut leaves to form brooms. Without the strings, the dried midribs are deemed useless. ‘You know,’ one elderly woman told me, ‘it’s very difficult (*mabudlay*) when parents are no longer around.’ She continued: ‘without them, children may drift apart.’

This image of parents as able to unify sibling sets, in turn, builds on and reinforces a view regarding siblings expressed by the people I worked with. According to them, whilst siblings are expected to support one another, it is also true that they are prone to conflicts, especially in adulthood, when they marry and form their own households. Such a view was, as I have described in this chapter’s opening scene, expressed by Tita Amy. Moreover, the idea that siblings are liable to enmity appears to be linguistically encoded, as the words for ‘sibling’ and ‘to be of the same kind’ (*utud*) and ‘severed’ and ‘a piece or part of’ (*utúd*) are heteronyms (Kaufmann 1900: 994).²

Like Lolo Minong and Lola Ising, other residents of Santa Rosa described the presence of heritable property—particularly land, which was, as I will explain below, a primary marker of wealth and class—as increasing the chances of conflict ensuing amongst siblings. As Jocano’s (1983: 38) earlier study suggests, such a view is held

² Furthermore, Kaufmann relates ‘*utud*’/‘*utúd*’ to ‘*bugto*,’ which means both ‘brother, sister’ and ‘to break, snap, part, sunder’ (1900: 140). An earlier dictionary likewise reflects these sets of meanings. Métrida translates the Castilian ‘*hermano*’/‘*hermana*’ (male/female sibling) as ‘*otod*’ and ‘*bugto*’ (1841: 610). In turn, ‘*otod*’ is used not just to mean ‘sibling’ but also various senses of ‘cut,’ as in ‘*descabezar*’ (to behead), ‘*otod sang liog*’ (‘to cut the head’) (546), and ‘*descolar*’ (to cut or remove), ‘*mag otod sang Ycog sang sapat*’ (‘to cut the tail of the creature’) (547).

throughout the Western Visayas. Amongst my interlocutors, references were often made to high-profile cases both within and outwith Iloilo where siblings from affluent families had a falling out and engaged in costly and protracted legal battles over inheritance. Such disputes, of course, were the stuff of popular soap operas and films, but also of society pages (see Caruncho 2016; M.A. Garcia 2015 for a prominent case).

Yet, as the story of the Mahilways suggests, land's capacity to engender enmity amongst siblings was dependent partly on its economic value. In a situation marked by an economic boom and the growth of the real estate industry, land had more weight compared to past situations where it was considered less valuable. Here, the emergence of a middle class with considerable purchasing power generated strain on relations. Moreover, the past of relationships mattered. Previous and ongoing discord amongst siblings, along with histories of obligations and the sense of fairness they generated, became more visible and came to shape disputes over land. Notably, such discord was intertwined with journeys of social mobility, including the expectations that they precipitate. At the same time, the surfacing and deepening of such discord may be minimised by parents by partitioning and selling properties before their death. For both siblingship and filiation, land created connections, as well as disconnections.

Becoming old-timers

Besides shaping ties of filiation and siblingship, land too gave rise to modes of belonging and identification. Here, Tito Celso's exhortation not to sell the land is significant as it draws attention to the place of land in the family's history. In my conversations with the older members of the family, including Lola Ising when she was still alive, land was central to the ways in which the history of the family, and of Santa Rosa and Iloilo more broadly, were recounted. Lola Ising often spoke of how, in the past, they tilled a significant portion of the land in the village. 'From the river to the coastline,' she told me many times. I initially found it difficult to imagine just how wide the land that they tilled was, especially given that most of the land was now

either walled off as a small subdivision or was occupied by informal settlers, for which Santa Rosa had become known (see Introduction).

By the time I met them, the Mahilways had had a continuous presence in the village for almost eight decades—interrupted only when they and other villagers fled to the countryside at the height of the Second World War. However, the family’s story, as it was told to me, began on the farmland in San Antonio. It was there—or more accurately, on the rice estate of which it was part—that Lola Ising and Lolo Minong met. In the 1930s, Lolo Minong was employed as an overseer (*encargado*) on the estate where Lola Ising’s brothers were also share tenants (*agsadór*).³ From a town some 25 miles to the northwest of Iloilo City where she and her widowed mother resided, Lola Ising would regularly visit her brothers in San Antonio. Through these visits, Lolo Minong and Lola Ising, the latter ten years younger than the former, came to know one another.

As *encargado*, Lolo Minong represented the landlord, and as such, had the power to determine who to retain as *agsadór* whilst also attending to their needs. Moreover, he supervised the work of the various *agsadór*, especially during harvest season, to ensure that the landlord’s share was not pilfered. As was the case with other parts of Western Visayas and the Philippines, the landlord provided the land and half of the inputs whilst the tenant provided the remaining half, as well as their labour (see Fegan 1978; Kerkvliet 2002 [1977]; Murray 1972). The harvest from a plot of land would be divided equally between landlord and tenant, unless the latter had incurred debts from the former, in which case, threshed rice amounting to the debt and corresponding interest would be deducted from the latter’s share. Indeed, it was through debt that landlords kept and controlled their tenants.

The estate was owned by Don Miguel L., a Moleño and the son of an affluent Chinese *mestizo* (a descendant of an immigrant Chinese who intermarried to a local woman, and who converted to Catholicism) trader. I shall discuss the historical context of *mestizos* in the next section.⁴ For now, I note that like many other *mestizos* of

³ For a discussion of the Hokkien origins of *agsa*, the rootword of *agsadór*, see Aguilar (1998: 79-80).

⁴ See Hau (2012) for a recent account of the history and vicissitudes of Chinese *mestizos* in the Philippines.

his time, Don Miguel was supposedly educated in Manila and Spain (see Chapter 2). Later, I was told, he had an illustrious career as a lawyer and was a key personality in the local legal scene.⁵ He was likewise successful in commerce, and came to own tracts of land in both Panay and Negros.

After a period of courtship, Lola Ising and Lolo Minong got married, but not without difficulty. The former had other, aggressive suitors who, at one point, sought to abduct her and threatened to hurt the latter. One such suitor went to the extent of bringing his parents and other close relatives to propose marriage. As Lola Ising and her children narrated, just as the suitor and his relatives were making their way to her natal house, with food and other gifts in tow, Lolo Minong arrived. He pretended to be a neighbour so he could join in the revelry. When it was time to eat, Lolo Minong quickly helped himself to the crab dish that the suitor's party brought, and he immediately took the crab's pincers. This act supposedly allowed Lolo Minong to outsmart his rival and to demonstrate his superior *dungan* (soul, but also 'double' or 'together'). Consequently, he garnered the support of his future mother-in-law, who I was told, half-jokingly offered herself to the other suitor as his replacement bride.

As has been explained by other writers (Aguilar 1998; Magos 1992), and resonant with the wider scholarship on Southeast Asia (B. Anderson 1990 [1972]; S. Errington 1989; 1990), precolonial and traditional cosmology in the Western Visayas posited humans as having varying levels (or 'heights') of *dungan*, which, in addition to being a life force, also enable them to prevail on and even dominate others. It was precisely those with heightened *dungan* who became what has been described in the literature as 'men of prowess' (O.W. Wolters 1999 [1982]). Importantly, the notion of *dungan* indicates that Western Visayans may have traditionally viewed persons as always already within siblingship. As a person's 'double' and an entity that one is always 'together' with, the *dungan* may be thought of as a sibling. Here, it may be thought of as akin to the 'birth' and 'body siblings' recorded elsewhere in island Southeast Asia (Allerton 2013: 39-40; Carsten 1995a; 1997).

⁵ For a description of the Iloilo legal profession in the early 1900s, see 'The Iloilo bar', 4 Phil LJ 93 (1917).

During my fieldwork, beliefs and practices surrounding *dungan* persisted, at least among older folk—one woman in her late 60s, for example, described her father as *dunganon* (‘full’ of *dungan*) as illustrated by his ability to fight witches. Meanwhile, some of my classificatory cousins, when they were infants, underwent a ritual called *batak dungan* (lit. pulling upward the *dungan*). As the name suggests, the ritual is meant to enhance a person’s *dungan*, thus minimising the chance that they would be sickly or easily dominated by others.

To resume the story, it was Lolo Minong who Lola Ising married in 1937. Reflecting, but also reinforcing the ties between *encargado* and landlord, and an instance of spiritual kinship or *compadrazgo* (see Foster 1953; Mintz & Wolf 1950), Don Miguel was one of the wedding sponsors.⁶ The wedding, however, had to be conducted in Lola Ising’s natal house, since her other suitors still sought to capture her, making a trip to the church potentially dangerous. This was also the reason why, immediately after the ceremony, the newlyweds moved to San Nicolas, across the river from Santa Rosa, and where Lolo Minong’s family originally resided.

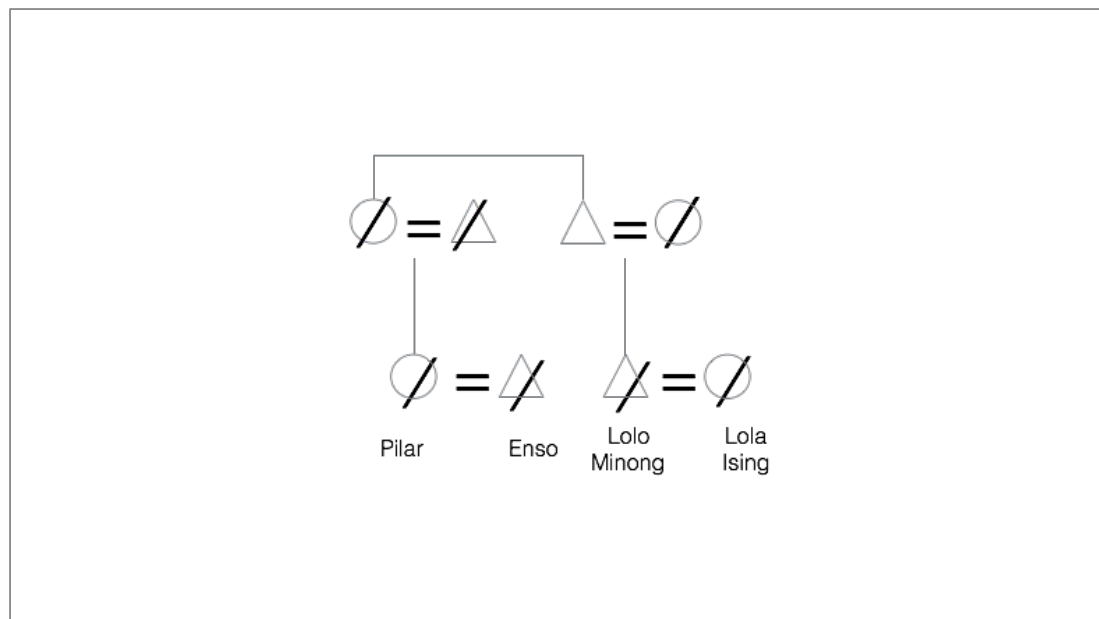


Figure 9. Lolo Minong and Enso

⁶ For earlier studies of *compadrazgo* in the Philippines, see Arce (1973), Blanc-Szanton (1979), and Hart (1977).

It so happened that around that time, Enso, the husband of Lolo Minong's first cousin Pilar, became the lessee of an expanse of land in Santa Rosa.⁷ The land was owned by Enrique Reyes, one of Enso's more affluent second cousins, and the surviving heir of a prominent politician and sugar *hacienda* owner in Negros, and whose family traced its origins to Molo. As Enrique had to devote his attention to their family's *hacienda*, he offered the land in Santa Rosa to Enso, who was, at that time, residing in San Nicolas. In exchange for an annual rent, Enso could use the land as he saw fit, including having it tilled by sharecroppers of his choice. Under such an arrangement, Enso would receive the landlord's share of the harvest, and he would have the prerogative of selecting his *agsadór*. He thus invited Lolo Minong to become his main *agsadór*, which the latter promptly accepted. Thus, a few months after their wedding, Lola Ising and Lolo Minong moved from San Nicolas to Santa Rosa. At the same time, the newlyweds sought their godfather's permission to farm portions of the estate in San Antonio, also on a share-tenancy basis.

Given Lolo Minong's previous employment as *encargado*, his becoming an *agsadór* may be described as an instance of downward occupational mobility. Yet his kinship ties with Enso and Don Miguel assured him of favourable terms. The 17 hectares that he and his wife cultivated made up the bulk of the land that Enso administered. Although Enso had another *agsadór* in Santa Rosa, the area given to that farmer was much smaller—it was barely two hectares. Moreover, Enso also allowed Lola Ising and Lolo Minong to till the one-hectare property in San Nicolas that he had inherited from his mother. The closeness between Enso and Lolo Minong stemmed from the fact that Pilar, the former's wife, grew up with the latter and his brothers after her mother passed away when she was still a child. The brothers considered her as their sister and oldest sibling. As I will discuss in Chapter

⁷ For reasons that I explain in Chapter 7, the Mahilway siblings called Enso and Pilar their 'Papá' and 'Mamá,' respectively. Unless I am writing from the perspective of the siblings, or quoting them, I omit these kinship terms. This is to minimise confusion, for, as Lola Ising's classificatory grandson, the generationally appropriate terms for me to use would be 'Lolo' and 'Lola.' My classificatory cousins, who just like me were born after Enso and Pilar died, referred to the two using the terms used by the ascending generation in combination with a second or third person possessive case depending on who they were talking to (e.g., 'your Papá' when talking with their parents or 'their Mamá' when talking to me).

7, this would have consequences for the succeeding generation (Tita Amy and her siblings and their cousins). In Don Miguel's case, it was precisely the ties of *compadrazgo* that allowed the Mahilways to cultivate portions of the estate in San Antonio even if Lolo Minong had ceased to be the overseer.⁸

If, in the preceding section, we saw how land mediated kinship ties (particularly how land accentuated enmities), here we see how kinship enabled access to property, whilst, at the same time, being strengthened through the provision of such access. Notably, although it was Lolo Minong's ties to Enso and Don Miguel that provided such access, it was Lola Ising who managed the various properties they tilled, including hiring and supervising farmhands. Lolo Minong had a congenital heart condition that limited his ability to do strenuous work. Tita Amy and her siblings recalled to me how their mother would wake early everyday so she could prepare breakfast for the household (including the farmhands), before attending to the field in Santa Rosa. Later in the morning, she would go to either San Nicolas or San Antonio. When it was planting or harvesting season, Lola Ising would stay for several days at a time on the farm in San Antonio. Thus, Tito Celso's objection to the sale of the farmland in San Antonio may be seen in light of how farming fell disproportionately on Lola Ising's shoulders.

At the same time, land enabled the Mahilways' kinship ties to flourish whilst establishing their place in the social hierarchy. This was particularly true in relation to Santa Rosa. Considered then as a *barrio*, which in the Philippines referred to rural villages, long-time residents recalled experiencing Santa Rosa as distant from the urban centres of Molo and Iloilo. In the late 1930s, the main boulevard running along the coast had yet to be built. The bridge that connected Santa Rosa to San Nicolas was also non-existent: if one wanted to cross the river, one had to take a longer route through another village, or else swim or use a small boat. Villagers frequently walked, and the very few vehicles that plied the area—as late as the 1950s, only one or two jeepneys made regular journeys between the village and the city—had to make do with the dirt road. This situation explained why Lola Ising had to stay on the farm in

⁸ For an ethnographic account of kinship ties and class conflict amongst landlord, overseer, and farmworkers in a sugar *hacienda* in the island of Negros, see Rutten (1991).

San Antonio during harvest and planting seasons, as it was around eight miles away from Santa Rosa. Electricity, likewise, had yet to arrive in the village—it would not be until the 1960s that it would do so, and in the meantime, villagers had to make do with gas lamps. Many of my older informants in the village recounted childhood nights when they and other children would play under the full moon, and mornings when they would wake up with their noses full of soot.

In fact, the village had a reputation for being a wilderness. It was supposedly a prime destination for bandits and others running from the law. I was told that during the Second World War, guerrillas hiding from the Imperial Japanese Army sought refuge in the village, and often successfully evaded their pursuers. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, the urban plan crafted in the late 1920s and early 1930s by the architect Juan Arellano indicated Santa Rosa and the other coastal villages of Molo as blank spaces, save for the then proposed boulevard. This reputation as a wilderness persisted until the 1960s when bodies of murder and rape victims would be found in the village's shrubland and wooded areas.

There were stories too of Santa Rosa and its neighbouring villages as inhabited by powerful beings, such as *tamawo* (fairies), *kama-kama* (elves), *kapre* (a giant creature), *santilmo* (a spirit of the dead that appears in the form of fire), *bagat* (a spirit that takes the form of big dogs), *aswang* (witch and viscera-sucker), and *maranhig* (the undead), familiar figures in the Western Visayan worldview (see Aguilar 1998: chap. 2; Magos 1992: 56-59; McCoy 1982b: 61). Lolo Minong, and his father before him, were recalled as having seen golden boats full of invisible people dock on the river near the family's house. My other older friends told me similar stories of encounters with powerful beings, including of women being wooed by them and even bearing their children.

Santa Rosa was also often described to me as sparsely populated. The narrations that I heard had the effect of portraying the village as almost uninhabited by humans: 'there were no households here yet' and 'we were the only ones here' were common expressions offered to me. To be sure, the village population in those years was nowhere near what it was when I arrived in 2014, when it was one of the densest areas of Iloilo City. At the same time, this does not mean that when Lola Ising and Lolo Minong first came to the village it was as empty as the narratives

would suggest, for as surviving civil registry records indicate, people did reside, get married, give birth, and die in the village before the couple's arrival.⁹ The census of 1918 likewise reports that the village population that year was in the hundreds (Census Office of the Philippine Islands 1921).

Depictions of Santa Rosa as a wilderness and an empty area were often intertwined with its portrayal as something that needed to be conquered. Hence, as share tenants, Lolo Minong and Lola Ising had to clear the land so they could use it for agricultural purposes—mainly for planting rice, corn, legumes, yams, sweet potatoes, and gourds and other vegetables. Lola Ising herself planted coconut and fruit-bearing trees, some of which were still alive when I arrived in the village. Portions of the land were also converted to fish ponds, with fresh water from the nearby river tapped using small canals. Fishing cages were also built along the river and the coastline.

In altering the landscape, the couple were assisted by their kin who moved with them to the village: Lolo Minong's parents and brothers, Lola Ising's mother and one of her brothers, and Enso and his family. Two houses were likewise built: one for Lolo Minong's extended household and another for Enso's. These houses were built a hundred metres apart, with no fence in between, and were linked by the sharing of food, as well as the movement of children, which I discuss in later chapters. When Lolo Minong's brother Lolo Berting had his own family, he built his own house beside Lolo Minong's; another brother, Lolo Pedring, built a house in San Nicolas, on a lot inherited by his wife from her parents.

In their narrations of the circumstances surrounding their family's arrival in Santa Rosa, the Mahilways made it clear that they were one of the village's *tumandok* families. Although this term sometimes pertains to those who are deemed 'native' of or born in a place, in this case it connotes precedence and long-term residence (see Zayas 1994; Zayas & la Peña 2012). As other writers have pointed out, precedence is a pervasive and potent way of establishing differentiation in Southeast Asia and

⁹ Archives Division, Bureau of Records Management (ADBRM) Philippines Civil Registration 1902-1945, Iloilo, Iloilo, Births 1925-1927; *ibid*, Births 1928-1931; *ibid*, Deaths 1924-1926; *ibid*, Deaths 1927-1931; *ibid*, Marriages 1924-1931 (all available on-line: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2018411>).

Austronesia (J.J. Fox 2006a [1996]; 2006b [1997]; 2009; see the other essays in Vischer 2009).

Here, physical occupation and pioneering transformation of a significant portion of the village dovetailed with migration and residential history to create a sense of rootedness (see Allerton 2013 for the idea of ‘rooting’). This was even if both Lolo Minong and Lola Ising came from elsewhere. They arrived in the village at a time when very few people resided there, and thus antedated the arrival of other internal migrants and informal settlers (the *baguhanon*, ‘new ones’), most of whom arrived starting in the 1980s.

The almost eight decades that had passed since the Mahilways’ arrival in Santa Rosa enabled them to create and nurture ties with their neighbours and other villagers. Some of these villagers were in fact Lolo Minong’s distant kin, as they had ascendants who were from San Nicolas and were related to Lolo Minong’s forebears. These kin, over time, intermarried with the other old-timer families of Santa Rosa. Thus, even if not one of Lola Ising’s and Lolo Minong’s children married into other families in the village (see, for example, Chapter 3), given the bilateral character of Ilonggo kinship, many of the other *tumandok* families were considered by the Mahilways as their *pariente*, distant relatives, whose precise genealogical links could no longer be ascertained. Notably, these *tumandok* families had continued to dominate the village’s leadership. By relying during elections on their extended kinship networks, they had fended off recent challenges from candidates from families not considered as *tumandok*.

Meanwhile, those not linked by marriage or some distant genealogical connections became connected to the Mahilways through ties of exchange and patronage. Poorer villagers were employed as farmhands, especially during planting and harvesting seasons. These villagers worked not just the land in Santa Rosa, but also the lot in San Nicolas and the farm in San Antonio. Some villagers, including children, would occasionally help in gathering produce in exchange for a portion of the harvest. Meanwhile, several men were hired by the family to become *mananggiti*, gatherers of sap from coconut trees, which would then be fermented into alcohol and sold in the city market. A few of these villagers came to live on the 17-hectare property farmed by the Mahilways, and some of them deepened their ties with the

Mahilways through ritual godparenthood during baptism and marriage, as Lolo Minong and Lola Ising did with Don Miguel.

The connections between the Mahilways and other villagers fed into and were strengthened by Enso's ties with some of Iloilo City's post-war political elites. As *encargado*, Enso was able to marshal political support, especially during elections, from those who worked or resided on the land, and to secure favours on their behalf from city officials. One story that I often heard was how Enso could dictate the number of votes that a candidate will receive: 'if he says "just one," then that candidate would only get one vote.' At the same time, even seemingly simple transactions, such as registering the birth of a child, were mediated by Enso as most of the villagers had very little education (see Chapter 2). Given the ties between Enso and Lolo Minong, it was not unusual for villagers who needed favours from the former to ask the latter to intercede on their behalf. Lolo Minong himself benefited from Enso's political capital, through which he secured a job after the war as messenger for the local branch of the telegram office.

Lolo Minong apparently had a reputation for being extremely generous—as his wife and children relished recounting. I was told, for instance, how he always insisted that Lola Ising and the others cook more than the household needed. He had a habit of inviting neighbours, fellow villagers, and even strangers who happened to pass by for a meal or a snack. Itinerant traders never left as he always ended up buying from them. Likewise, the family's neighbours often received extra produce from him. Older neighbours, when I spoke to them, affirmed this memory of Lolo Minong.

Thus, it was not a surprise, said Lolo Minong's children, that when he died in 1984, his funeral was well attended. The coffin had already reached the cemetery of Molo, yet the tail end of the funeral procession had yet to leave the family's house in Santa Rosa. Since funeral processions at that time were still performed on foot, and the cemetery was more than half an hour away from the village, the length of the procession was taken by his children as indicative of how much he was loved and respected by other villagers.

For the Mahilway siblings particularly, another way in which the respect and reputation of their family was experienced was this: when they were growing up,

wherever they went in the village, they would be greeted by everyone, including older folks, who would recognise them as Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's children. 'Where are you off to, little girl?', Tita Amy recalled being asked often. Such greetings made them feel acknowledged and respected.

Thus, in their narratives, the Mahilways depicted their ties with the rest of Santa Rosa as having flourished. Here, they evoke the works of the first generation of post-war Philippinists (see Hollnsteiner 1963*b*; 1973 [1962]; Landé 1965*a*; Lynch 2004 [1984]). This body of scholarship characterised relations in the lowlands, particularly those between the poor and their powerful and affluent patrons, as enabled by ties of reciprocity and obligation that ultimately underpin political factions, and as generally devoid of conflict (for critiques, see Cannell 1999: 6-12; Kerkvliet 1995; Quimpo 2005). Although they did not own the land, the Mahilways, through relations of kinship, but also beneficence, fashioned themselves as a family of import. At the same time, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, the family parlayed their relatively privileged access to the land into educational success, which landless residents of Santa Rosa (and even fellow sharecroppers, but whose landholdings were much smaller) had difficulty achieving.

Yet, there were signs that life in the village was not as trouble-free as portrayed in the family's accounts. Violence, to begin with, was interwoven with the political ties that the family, through Enso, was part of. I have already mentioned in passing how the village was, at some point, a dumping ground for dead bodies. Based on my conversation with other residents, it seems likely that some of the dead bodies were related to the political conflicts that emerged in Iloilo in the immediate post-war decades. As Leichter (1975) describes, the city in those decades was mired in the rivalry between politicians who belonged to the old landed elite and those of an upwardly mobile background.

Moreover, one of the older Mahilway siblings hinted that their Papá Enso died in the 1960s after an enemy had a malevolent curse (*hiwít*) cast on him (see McCoy 1982*b*: 153; Ponteras 1980: 245-48; see also Lieban 1967). Although that sibling did not give details surrounding the witchcraft, they intimated to me that their Papá's enemy was envious of his stature in the community. It was also likely, they speculated, that the enemy's ire was either the result of their Papá's unwillingness or

inability to accede to a request of a resident of Santa Rosa, or caused by one of his political enemies. Either way, ties of patronage, rooted in the land and central to the Mahilways' status and relations, carried with them the potential for violence and even death.

Landlords and tenants

Thus, land not only mediated ties of siblingship and filiation, and anchored identities and relations: as we have seen, given the historical conditions surrounding land ownership in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines, it also linked Santa Rosa with the world of land-owning elites, and as such, it also stitched together the lives and relations of my interlocutors and broader histories of class formation and transformation, as well as colonialism and state formation. I have already alluded to this ability to link the intimate with the political in my discussion of the Mahilways' ties with Don Miguel, and Enso's connections with the post-war political elites of Iloilo. In this section, I approach this issue by tracing how the family came to own their land.

As Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's fruit of toil, land was hard-earned, not only because of the kind of labour demanded by farming (which, as we have seen, fell disproportionately on Lola Ising's shoulders), but also because of the time it took and the obstacles that had to be overcome before the Mahilways could become property owners. From the late 1930s to the early 1980s, a period of about five decades, Lolo Minong and Lola Ising remained share tenants. Owing to the history of land ownership in the Philippines, which I shall outline shortly, many, particularly in rural areas, became sharecroppers; some became leaseholders who then contracted sharecroppers to cultivate the land; others became seasonal workers for agricultural estates or wage workers for tenant farmers. Land ownership was an elite affair.

In fact, my Ilonggo friends often spoke of being wealthy in terms of possessing land. The local term for the wealthy, *manggaranon*, derives from the root word *manggad*, which refers to property, usually land, but sometimes includes jewellery, houses, cars, and other such assets (see Kaufmann 1900: 567). Thus, when one woman was teased

by kin and neighbours that she was already *manggaranon*—one of her daughters married the sole heir of an *hacendero* family in Negros—she responded that she was not one for she does not own tracts of land.¹⁰ Only her *hacendero* son-in-law was *manggaranon*.¹¹

Under Spanish rule, only Spaniards, religious orders, and a small number of families in the country gained access to vast tracts of land. As described by Rafael (1993 [1988]: chap. 5), these families were at first composed of the Spanish-era *principalía* class: initially those who were descended from the precolonial chiefs, and who functioned as town and village heads. Later, the *principalía* families were supplanted economically by Chinese *mestizo* families. As Wickberg (1965) has documented, the *mestizo* families derived their wealth initially from merchant activities, and their rise transpired after the Spanish colonial government expelled the ethnic Chinese in the aftermath of the British occupation of Manila from 1762 to 1764.

In the middle of the 19th century, ethnic Chinese immigrants were once again permitted to enter and settle in the colony, and they came to dominate trade, hence compelling the *mestizos* to shift to agriculture. These *mestizos* obtained their landholdings through a combination of strategies: outright purchase; the conversion of owner-cultivators into sharecroppers and the acquisition of their land due to unpaid debts; the rental of friar estates; and the clearing of forests. The introduction of land titles in the late 19th century likewise allowed this incipient propertied class to expand their landholdings by dispossessing through legal means unknowing farmers and land owners (Aguilar 1998: 110-18; W.G. Wolters 2010 [1999]).

I should emphasise that it was also under Spanish rule that the notion of the nuclear and monogamous ‘family’ was introduced and enshrined in law, alongside

¹⁰ For a discussion of the emergence of the category *hacendero*—including why *hacendado*, the Castillian word for landowner, which was in use in Spanish America, was not used in the Philippines—see Aguilar (1998: chap. 4).

¹¹ Curiously, the dictionary compiled by the missionary Métrida (1841) does not explicitly define *manggad*, but it does contain various examples using the word, and together these examples give a picture of *manggad* as meaning valuable or wealth. For instance, *deposito* is glossed as ‘*Manḡad nḡa pinatago*’ (A valuable for safekeeping), whilst *derrochar* is rendered as ‘*Mag buhaha, con mag osic sang manḡad*’ (To squander or waste wealth) (ibid: 542). On the other hand, *hacienda* is defined as ‘*Manḡad. Duta nḡa pinanḡoma*,’ which roughly translates as ‘Valuable. Land used for agriculture’ (ibid: 609). Here, the impression is that whilst there are many kinds of *manggad*, *hacienda* is the prime exemplar.

the regulation of inheritance and the introduction of surnames. Here, we see an instance of how state- and church-sanctioned kinship norms were central to the story of class formation in the Philippines (cf. McKinnon & Cannell 2013a). As described by Aguilar (1998: 57-58), the introduction of these norms stimulated strategic behaviour amongst the elites (including the *mestizos*) to preserve and transmit wealth and power ‘within the family.’

In the pre-conquest situation, although valuables, heirlooms, elaborate houses, debt slaves, and office were passed on by chiefs to their children (see Junker 1999; W.H. Scott 1994a: 143-46; 1994b), heirs and successors had to prove and build their own status, power, and wealth. Also, given a relatively fluid social structure, it was possible for debt slaves and their descendants to rise to the apex of pre-conquest society through achievements and demonstration of prowess. More crucially, the idea of land as an alienable and transmissible private property did not exist; landholdings were part of complex local magical-material economies that linked chiefs and villagers in exchanges of protection, tributes, labour, and debt (Aguilar 1998: 63-69).¹²

The incipient elite’s hold on landholdings deepened under American rule. The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1898 by Spain and the United States, stipulated that the new possessors of the Philippine Islands would respect private property, to the benefit of existing landowners. Moreover, the introduction of the Torrens land title system, along with the disruptions caused by the Spanish-American War, enabled landowners to claim ownership of lands cultivated by small-scale farmers, as well as state-owned properties. Land-grabbing was particularly pronounced in areas conducive to the cultivation of monocrops such as rice and sugar cane, as was also the case on the island of Negros (W.G. Wolters 2010 [1999]). The sale of friar estates, which started during this period, also led to the expansion of *mestizo* families’ landholdings (see Roth 1977).

The owners of the landholdings that the Mahilways tilled were from *mestizo* families. I have already briefly described Don Miguel’s background. Here I add that Enso’s second cousin Enrique was likewise of *mestizo* provenance. As I have detailed,

¹² The most recent and exhaustive account of pre-colonial chiefdoms in the Philippines is that of Junker (1999).

Enrique owned both the 17 hectares that the Mahilways tilled in Santa Rosa and the neighbouring property measuring almost 2 hectares. Combined, both properties accounted for about a quarter of all titled land in the village. Enrique's maternal and paternal grandparents, I was told, were residents of the town centre of Molo, the Chinese quarter during the Spanish colonial period. Whilst Enrique's paternal grandparents' wealth apparently came from the then profitable textile industry, his maternal grandparents were supposedly traders of chinaware. His father, in turn, purchased tracts of land in Iloilo and its surrounding towns, and like other affluent Moleño *mestizos* in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, also in the island of Negros.

Enso himself had links to the world of *mestizo* landowners, albeit frayed ones. Whilst his maternal grandparents were of a privileged *mestizo* background, he and his parents ended up excluded from such a milieu. Enso's mother was disowned by her parents after she eloped with Enso's father, who was of considerably lesser social stature. Consequently, she was excluded from the family's extensive landholdings in Negros, but was given a mere hectare in San Nicolas, which as I have mentioned, Enso eventually inherited.

The rest of the land in Santa Rosa was also owned by *mestizo* families. Records from the cadastral survey conducted by the American colonial government beginning in 1913 indicate that all titled land in the village at that time was owned by recognisably *mestizo* families, mainly of Molo and Negros, and a few of Jaro.¹³ Most of these families, older villagers told me, were in fact linked by marriages. Such ties, I was told, explained why some of these families had, during my fieldwork, the same administrator for what remained of their landholdings in Santa Rosa and elsewhere. Notably, and echoing what the historians cited above have documented, those I worked with suggested that several of these families accumulated their landholdings in part through illicit means, such as utilising ties with state officials to register under their name parcels of land that they did not own.

¹³ I base this assertion on the 'Lot Data Computation' and 'Area Sheet' forms for the district of Molo, Iloilo cadastre of the American-era Bureau of Public Lands. These documents were held, during my fieldwork, at the Land Management Service office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Iloilo City.

Santa Rosa was certainly not unique in terms of its history of land ownership. Oral historical accounts gathered after the Second World War, for instance, indicate that a similar pattern holds for the other coastal parts of Molo and Arevalo. One *barrio*, for example, is reported as originally submerged by the sea, but as the sea receded over the years, and with the help of a newly constructed breakwater in a nearby village, the land became dry. Affluent Moleño families claimed the land and built vacation houses, thus displacing the few residents of the area, who supposedly agreed to move elsewhere in exchange for housing materials, transfer-related expenses, and titles to their new land.¹⁴ Another *barrio* supposedly came into being in 1898, when a prominent Moleño and the owner of a ‘certain portion’ of the village, helped organise the holding of the first mass (presumably by securing the services of a priest from the church in Molo) and *zarzuela* (a dramatic genre then popular in Iloilo; see Fernandez 1978) in the *barrio*.¹⁵ At the time of my fieldwork, traces of this history were still palpable, not just because these families continued to have landholdings in the area. Several state schools were named after these families’ patriarchs—usually prompted by the families’ donation of the school lots (see Chapter 2). Some roads and even whole villages likewise carried the name of these families.

In the late 1970s, when most of Lolo Minong’s and Lola Ising’s children had already graduated from university, the family began to pay for their six-hectare farmland in San Antonio. Half was to be acquired through the Marcos regime’s land reform programme, where the state procured agricultural landholdings exceeding 7 hectares each, and which were used in rice and corn cultivation, and distributed the excess to tenants who paid amortisations for 15 years (see Ledesma 1982 for an account). The other half was to be purchased directly from one of the descendants of Don Miguel, who offered it to the Mahilways in recognition of Lolo Minong’s long-standing relationship with their family. This other half was similarly paid for on an extended instalment basis, and as the law limited land reform beneficiaries’

¹⁴ National Library of the Philippines (NLP) Historical Data Papers, Iloilo Historical Data, History and cultural life of Barrio San Juan (available on-line: <http://nlpdl.nlp.gov.ph:81/HDO1/p18/m5/b5/home.htm>).

¹⁵ *ibid*, History and cultural life of Barrio Calumpang, 1953 (available on-line: <http://nlpdl.nlp.gov.ph:81/HDO1/p18/m5/b2/home.htm>).

landholdings to 3 hectares, it was registered under Tita Mila's name on an in-trust basis. A family friend, one of Tita Amy's friends at university who became a solicitor, and the same person who would help the siblings negotiate with the real estate developer (see above), provided legal advice and drafted the trust agreement.

In contrast, the one-hectare lot in Santa Rosa was obtained under less positive circumstances. Sometime in the late 1970s, nieces and nephews of Enso's second cousin Enrique became the new owners of the 17-hectare field and the adjacent two-hectare lot after their uncle died a single man. Enso himself and his wife had died some ten years previously, in effect leaving their daughter Lucing as the new overseer. The new owners sought to retake possession of the land, the Mahilways told me, notwithstanding a signed agreement from the 1930s giving Enso and his descendants the right to oversee the land—including tilling and renting it out, for so long as someone in the family is able and willing to do so. They supposedly betrayed Lucing's trust, which she accorded to them since they were her third cousins, by asking her to affix her signature on blank sheets of paper, claiming that it was for purposes of updating the land's registration documents. Two weeks later, Lucing received a document through the mail. The blank sheets she signed were now a legal instrument declaring that she was voluntarily returning the land to its owners, and that she was giving up her right to procure three hectares of the land under the land reform programme.

Faced with the possibility of eviction, Lolo Minong sought the help of a relative working at the local office of the ministry of agrarian reform. The relative suggested that Lolo Minong could file a claim as the land's actual cultivator, and might even exploit legal loopholes that would allow the Mahilways to own most, if not all, of the 17-hectares—presumably by filing separate claims under the names of Lolo Minong, Lola Ising, and their respective brothers. This latter suggestion was rejected outright by Lolo Minong. For him, I was told repeatedly by Lola Ising and her children, owning the piece of land where their house stands, and having some land for his children was good enough. He also did not wish to deprive Lucing who, on paper, had already given up all her rights to the land, and their neighbours the Nuñezes, the family that tilled the smaller 2-hectare lot. 'Your grandfather was excessively compassionate (*támà ka maloloy-on*),' Lola Ising said.

In the end, the Mahilways negotiated with the land's new owners who wanted to avoid a potentially disadvantageous lawsuit. The owners gave one hectare each to the couple Lolo Minong and Lola Ising, and to Lucing, whilst Lola Ising's brother Lolo José, who maintained the fish ponds, was given half a hectare. The Nuñezes too were given half a hectare. Consistent with their depiction of Lolo Minong as compassionate, Lola Ising and her children emphasised that it was actually he who decided to share the land with the three other beneficiaries. Like half of the rice farm in San Antonio, Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's share had to be registered under a different name—Lolo Pabling's, Lolo Minong's bachelor brother—to skirt statutory limits on the amount of land that the couple were permitted to have. After the ownership of these parcels of land was transferred in the early 1980s, Enrique's heirs, all professionals and with neither experience nor interest in agriculture, proceeded to build a housing development on the remainder of the lot. This displaced poorer families who, with permission from the Mahilways and Enso, used to live on the land.

Compared with the other sharecroppers in Santa Rosa, the Mahilways considered themselves relatively fortunate, for they acquired their land in the 1970s and the 1980s—up to two decades before the other sharecroppers. The Nuñezes, although they could have filed a separate claim, and thus have purchased up to three hectares, opted to accept the half hectare negotiated for them by Lolo Minong. They did not have access to a lawyer who could have provided them with sound legal advice, which was critical given the generally limited educational achievements of that family's grandparental and parental generations.

Meanwhile, three other sharecropper families who worked for other landowners became beneficiaries of the land reform programme, although it was not until the late 1980s (or, in one case, as late as the early 2000s) that these families would receive the titles to their land. When I visited one of these families, Lola Soling, a widow in her 80s and already sickly and weak, complained to me that the land, the title of which they received in 1999, was only a third of what was indicated on the certificate of land transfer issued in 1973 during the Marcos regime. This prompted her to file a case with the local courts in 2007. Evoking the historical association between landlords and land grabbing that I have sketched, she described her former landlord as having attempted to rob her of what she and her late husband were

entitled to receive. As of the time of Lola Soling's death in late 2014, just a week after Lola Ising's, the case remained unresolved.

As the Mahilways themselves suggested on several occasions, their eventual transformation into property owners may thus be thought of as resulting from particular relations, including ties with a local functionary and a solicitor, and favourable connections with a former landlord's heir, but also attenuated ties with the descendants of another landlord. These relations allowed the family to qualify for, and provided the impetus for them to take advantage of, the state's land reform programme; they provided legal and bureaucratic knowledge that, in turn, enabled the family to maximise their landholdings, thus setting them apart from other share tenants and residents of Santa Rosa. Five decades after the Mahilways arrived in the village, aside from being *tumandok*, they also came to own properties that, as we have seen, would later heighten sibling conflicts. Furthermore, as the relations that the family came to rely on suggest, and which I elaborate in the next section, the elites themselves and the economy had been transformed.

Vanishing elites, disinterested professionals, and unknowing newcomers

To recall, I have suggested that land's ability to inflict and exacerbate breaches in relations was intensified by an ongoing economic boom that, in turn, was fuelled by projects of social mobility and the emergence of middle classes. In this section, I suggest that journeys of mobility likewise tinged the ways in which the people of Santa Rosa made sense of the transition from tenancy to ownership that I have described above and the broader economic shifts it was part of. Part of how my interlocutors apprehended these changes was through a distinction between the old elite and themselves as people who have successfully embarked on journeys of upward mobility. They also distinguished themselves from those who, like them, also came to own land through the state's land reform programme, but who had failed to preserve their landholdings.

I have already mentioned how Lolo Minong was recalled by his children as telling them that they would not have land to inherit, and as warning them of the dangers of land as an inheritance. Here, I add that Lolo Minong's caution was often made in relation to his exhortation that his children do well in their education for it was going to be their inheritance (see Chapter 2). I have likewise indicated that by the time that the family acquired their properties in the 1970s and the 1980s, most of Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's children had graduated from university and were already earning their pay as professionals. Indeed, the Mahilways' views on land—as something not to be desired and as a potential source of problems—should be seen in the context of them having had alternative sources of living. Here, the morality of the land was tied to the shift from agriculture to salaried and professional work as the main source of income, but also prestige and social mobility.

As the succeeding chapters demonstrate, the post-war expansion of educational and professional opportunities led the Mahilway siblings and their generational contemporaries and successors to pursue non-agricultural livelihoods, including outside Iloilo. This was a pattern observed elsewhere in the Philippines, prompting one writer to describe the demise of 'a social order based on land' and its replacement by 'a class system based on cash value' (Cespedes & Gibbs 1972: 879-80; see also Cespedes 1971).

It was not just, however, farming families that experienced changes after the war. The landed elites did too. Stimulated by a foreign currency crisis and an emergent economic nationalism, both of which led to a regime of import-substitution industrialisation, segments of the landed elite diversified into other industries, including manufacturing (Carroll 1973 [1962]; Pinches 1992: 391-92; Rivera 1994). Agriculture started to be dislodged as the source of social standing and economic and political power. For provincial elites, as Benedict Anderson (1988: 17) described, these changes also implied transplanting themselves from their estates to Manila, especially to its new gated communities.

The illustrious families of Iloilo, particularly Molo and Jaro, were no exception, albeit their trajectory was intertwined with that of the sugar industry in the island of Negros. I have already described how these families migrated to Negros in the 19th century to put up sugar *haciendas*, how their ties to Iloilo became increasingly

attenuated after the labour unrest of the 1920s and the succeeding decades and more so after the war, and how they were supplanted by new economic and political players (see Introduction).

It is worth mentioning at this point that the old rich families of Molo and Jaro were often imagined by my friends in Iloilo as having ‘disappeared.’ Even if many of these families continued to own houses and other properties in Iloilo, most of their descendants—just like the Reyes heirs—had resided in Negros, Manila, or even abroad. These families’ properties had also been parcelled following transmission and inheritance, as well as the state’s land reform programme. Due to the physical absence of these families from Iloilo, their unwillingness to continue with agriculture, and the shift into white- and blue-collar work, several of these properties had become inhabited by informal settlers. This was what had occurred in sections of Santa Rosa, where dense pockets of informal settlers had blossomed since the 1980s.

One case provides a vivid illustration of this displacement. Sometime during my fieldwork, much to the excitement and surprise of my Ilonggo friends, workers began clearing the garden of the Yusay-Consing mansion across the plaza of Molo (see Figure 10). One of the famed old houses of Molo and Jaro, it was built sometime in the early 1920s as the residence of the family of Doña Petra Lacson, the widow of Don Estanislao Yusay, an official during the late Spanish colonial period and a jurist during the American occupation (see Manuel 1955: 486-87; P. Reyes 1908: 59). Both Doña Petra and Don Estanislao were from Moleño *mestizo* families. As the cadastral records indicate, the couple owned tracts of land in the coastal area of Molo and its adjacent municipality, Villa de Arevalo.¹⁶ One of their children, Rosario, married Timoteo Consing Sr., also of *mestizo* descent, and who would become governor of the province. The mansion was eventually passed on to Timoteo Sr. and his family. At the start of my fieldwork, the mansion was unoccupied and had an eerie look to it. From the outside, it seemed to be falling apart; the trees and shrubs around it badly needed to be trimmed. Only a lone security guard in a small booth by the front gate watched over the property.

¹⁶ See note 13.

When word spread that the property had been sold by the Yusay-Consing heirs to the SM group, some Ilonggos became concerned that the mansion would be demolished and replaced by a tacky grocery or mini-mall. Previously, in the late 1970s and the late 1990s, the group opened two malls in the city. A Manila-based conglomerate owned by the Sy family, and which started as a small shoe shop in the 1950s, the group was now one of the biggest in the country. In addition to shopping malls and retail, for which it was best known, it had also expanded into banking, real estate development, leisure and tourism, and education. The family, led by its patriarch, Henry, was, in 2015, the country's richest.¹⁷ Its rise to affluence is part of the emergence of a 'new rich' that is often described as dominated by Filipino Chinese entrepreneurs, and whose interests lie predominantly in services (Hau 2012; Hedman & Sidel 2000: chap. 6; Pinches 1992; 1999; Raquiza 2014).



Figure 10. The Yusay-Consing mansion

¹⁷ <http://www.forbes.com/philippines-billionaires/>, accessed 28 December 2016.

After months of speculation, it was confirmed that the company had bought the property, but it would not demolish the mansion.¹⁸ Instead, it would be ‘adaptively reused’ to house retail shops, a small museum, and restaurants and a café (Villalón 2014). Advocates of cultural heritage preservation were pleased with this development, and so were city officials, who interpreted SM’s investment as a vote of confidence on the city’s potential and significance as an economic centre in the Western Visayas region. Moreover, the mansion was showcased to delegates of an international gathering that the city hosted in 2015, and for which the restoration was completed on time (Burgos 2015).

I also heard other interpretations. Some of those who knew of my fieldwork in Santa Rosa suggested that even if the sale were significant—official records indicate that SM paid 176.64 million pesos (approx. £2.52 million) for the property, although some suggested that this figure could have been lower than the actual transaction for tax purposes—the number of surviving heirs who had to divide the proceeds was also significant. As records from the land registry indicate, SM bought the property from 50 part-owners, some with shares like ‘1/6 of 8.675%’ or ‘3/9 of 1/9 of 1/8.’

More importantly, there were speculations that the sale might have been prompted by some of the descendants not having other sources of income. The family’s estate had supposedly become diminished through the years, and the mansion was one of its last remaining jewels. This was partly the fault, I was told in hushed voices, of some of the descendants who did not value what their family had, and were so used to a lavish lifestyle that could no longer be sustained. Some of the heirs, too, were mired in vice and did not even finish university, I was told.

I do not know if these speculations had basis, but what is notable is the contrast that they drew between the rich and the poor. Here, the erstwhile landed elite were depicted not just as greedy land-grabbers, or those who had disappeared, as we have seen, but as irresponsible and unable to manage their affairs properly. The poor (or non-rich), on the other hand, were portrayed as potentially better. One woman working for the city hall thus said: ‘Sometimes, the poor are better. Unlike those born rich, they strive hard. They don’t waste opportunities in life.’

¹⁸ <http://www.smpriime.com/iloilo-heritage-structure-will-be-preserved--sm>, accessed 28 December 2016.

As this woman's statement suggests, the distinction between rich and poor is not total: some of the poor may also 'waste opportunities in life.' To go back to the Mahilways, at times they distinguished themselves from other former sharecroppers and beneficiaries of the land reform programme. They pointed out that unlike these others, they had been able to preserve their landholdings due to their educational and professional achievements; prior to Lola Ising's illness and death, they did not have any compelling reason to sell their properties.

By the time of my fieldwork, most of the other land reform beneficiaries in Santa Rosa had already sold portions, if not most, of the land that they had acquired under the programme. Lola Soling, who I mentioned above, for instance, had to either sell or mortgage (with no real possibility of redemption) more than three quarters of the 1.18 hectares awarded to her, leaving less than 3000 square metres to her surviving children. When I spoke to her months before her death, she explained that her family had no other choice but to partition and sell the land, since she and her children did not have other sources of income. They did not go to university, hence the kinds of paid job available to them were limited. It was only with the grandchildren, she said, that the family's fortune appears to have hope of being reversed.

The Mahilways distinguished themselves too from their kin who had to sell their land. Another beneficiary whose landholdings had been diminished was Lola Ising's late brother, Lolo José, whose property was reduced from the original one hectare to just slightly more than 1000 square metres. Records from the local registry office indicate that Lolo José commenced partitioning and selling his land a couple of months after he received his title from the Reyeses. He did so to fund a spendthrift lifestyle that revolved around women and alcohol, and which would culminate with him dying from liver cirrhosis. Even Lucing's share, also a hectare, had been reduced to just more than 1,600 square meters, after it had been partitioned and sold off—mostly by Tito Nestor and his wife Alma.

I fill in details of Tito Nestor's and Alma's story in detail in Chapter 5, but here I simply wish to say that whilst vice crosscut class lines, they were easily imagined by those I came to know in Santa Rosa as something attached to poor people, or as endangering the trajectory of the upwardly mobile, or which threatened

to dissipate the possessions of the rich. Thus, the partitioning and selling of land connoted failure to live with the ideals of upward social mobility. If one register of middle-classness was a lack of desire to accumulate land beyond what is deemed necessary or fair, an inability to hold on to one's landholdings due to financial needs, or worse vices, was a mark of a punctuated ascent and even loss of standing.

The irony here, of course, is whilst the Mahilways took pride in outlasting other land reform beneficiaries, it was precisely because they maintained their landholdings that conflict surfaced after Lola Ising died. Meanwhile, Santa Rosa, their family's home for almost eight decades, and of which they were *tumandok*, had been completely transformed. Given its image as densely populated by impoverished informal settlers, as a hotbed of criminality, and as an eyesore and unsanitary, continued residence in the village no longer fitted with, and even diminished, the family's educational and professional achievements. Santa Rosa, in other words, was no longer suitable for a family that was exalted for their successful pursuit of middle-classness. Thus, during Lola Ising's wake, one of the visitors, Tita Monica's college classmate, who was also a fellow immigrant to the US, remarked that Santa Rosa was 'like a squatter's area.'

The repercussions of Santa Rosa's transformation were not limited to perceptions of non-residents. They also included the Mahilways' standing amongst fellow villagers. On one occasion, Tita Amy's husband Tito Ruel brought one of their delivery vans to an auto repair shop located along one of the inner streets of the village. The shop owners, who were *baguhanon*, did not recognise him. When he told them where he lived, they asked him: 'whose land is that and how come you've been able to fence it off?' The *tumandok* had become a stranger.

Conclusion

By tracing the entanglements of land with persons and their relations, I have in this chapter described how the inheritance of properties constitute both connections and disconnections. Whilst the transmission and perpetuation of land may recall and reproduce memory, identity, and status, it may also inflict and deepen wounds in

relations. Moreover, as I have shown, land's ability to create, maintain, and sever ties was itself linked to its prevailing value, which, in turn, was shaped and transformed by broader economic and political forces.

Whilst land mediated ties between parents and their children, as well as amongst siblings, it also brought to bear histories of conquest and state- and class-formation on these relations. Consequently, as an inheritance, land evoked ambivalence not just because of the potential for disputes that it represents, but also because of its historical association with exclusion, loss, and dispossession. At the same time, whilst these histories figured in the lives of my interlocutors, land also enabled them to establish relations of precedence and patronage.

All of these—ties of filiation and siblingship, the land, and class relations—were entwined with journeys of social mobility. In the absence of transmissible and heritable land, sharecroppers pursued educational and professional achievements that eventually contributed to the decline of the agrarian economy, including the social relations with which it was mutually embedded. As part of this process, former sharecropping families became small landowners. These achievements likewise allowed these families to distinguish themselves from the old landlords whose fortunes had declined in the meanwhile. These achievements too set apart the successful families from other former sharecroppers, including kin, whose educational and professional aspirations were compromised, not the least because they had less land to farm in the past. Yet, even if valorised, the achievement of such aspirations generated ruptures in relations; it also led to the appreciation of land, thus furthering familial disputes.

Finally, much like land, this chapter has brought together several themes that run through the succeeding chapters. Here, I highlight two. First, how, for the people I worked with, siblingship was always entwined with other relations, including filiation and marriage. Second, how (late) adulthood was often described as potentially contentious for siblings, with land disputes triggered by the death of parents as perhaps the most visible and significant issue. As I have indicated, understanding such conflicts requires attending to the history of the relations involved, including how they were interwoven with other relations.



Figure 11. Inside the Mejica Museum

Chapter 2

‘An inheritance that cannot be stolen’: education and its transformations

It was at the tail end of the harvest season, in late September, when, for the first time, I visited the Mahilways’ farm in San Antonio. I joined Tita Amy and her husband, Tito Ruel, one Saturday morning, when they went to oversee the reaping and threshing of the rice crop. We left Santa Rosa at nine in the morning, and some 40 minutes later, including a brief stopover so the couple could buy snacks for the workers, we arrived at the farm. Tito Ruel, who drove the mini-van, decided to take the then newly built motorway.

At the farm, whilst some workers—a few of whom were Tita Amy’s cousins and other relatives on Lola Ising’s side—were manually reaping the rice crop, others were doing the threshing using a small stationary machine that had been set up near the edge of the farm by the roadside. Tita Amy toured me around, until we reached the concrete fence that separated the farm from the adjoining expansive real estate development. Looking around, she remarked that perhaps around the same time the following year, their family would no longer own the farm.

She then recounted that familiar story, one that her older sister, Tita Dolor, as well as her mother, had conveyed to me several times during my numerous visits to their house. When Tita Amy and her siblings were still attending school and college, the story went, Lolo Minong, their father, repeatedly told them that they should strive to finish their studies for he, a share cropper at that time, would not have land and other property to pass on to them.¹

¹ Following British English convention, I use ‘school’ in this thesis to refer to institutions offering primary/elementary and secondary education, whilst ‘university’ pertains to higher education in general, but also to an institution that offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. As with American English, attending a higher education institution is often spoken of in Philippine

In a separate occasion, Tita Dolor, recalled for me Lolo Minong's words: 'I've neither money nor land to leave behind, only your education.' 'Besides,' he told her, 'no one can steal your education, no matter what; so long as you're alive, it's yours.' He exhorted Tita Dolor and her siblings to use their education for the rest of their lives: 'until you become adults and have your own families and livelihood.' Education, Tita Dolor recollected her father emphasising, 'is what you'll inherit from us.'

Lolo Minong was certainly not unique in conceiving of education as an inheritance. Fegan (1978) has documented that as early as the 1930s, amidst the expansion of non-farm opportunities, as well as decreased availability of land that could be passed on, peasant parents in Central Luzon had sought to provide their children with education: it was to be the substitute for land. Following the language of Marxist anthropology in vogue at that time, he described education as constituting an 'establishment fund,' that is, a means for parents to ensure that their children can set up their own household and pursue a preferred lifestyle upon marriage.

Similar notions of education have been documented elsewhere in the Philippines (e.g. Johnson 1998 for the Southern Philippines; Trager 1988 for Northern Luzon). More recent accounts, in fact, indicate the continued importance of education amongst Ilonggos and other Filipinos (e.g. Aguilar *et al.* 2009; Labiste 2007; Martin 2015). Parents have been described as viewing education as an investment and a route out of poverty (Estudillo *et al.* 2014; Quisumbing *et al.* 2004). Suzuki (1996) reports that amongst Ilonggos in Central Mindanao, education was seen as an enduring, if less visible, kind of success, especially when compared with money and other material wealth. Moreover, parents of limited means 'invested' in their children's education as a way of securing both their own and their children's futures. These descriptions of education seem to be consistent with another set of findings: that children's value in the Philippines partly derives from their help in household chores during childhood, their projected financial contributions in adulthood, and

English as 'going to college,' even if the institution is, in fact, a university. In this thesis, I use 'college' to refer to a higher education institution that only confers undergraduate degrees.

expected extension of support to elderly parents (R.C. Bulatao 1975; but see Mathews 1986).

In this chapter, I suggest that the experiences and narrations of my Ilonggo friends point to how striving for education was irreducible to a logic of investment. The notion of investment appears to imply a temporality where resources in the present are used (i.e. not consumed) in the hopes of generating value in the future. Likewise, it conjures a specific personhood, one that is reminiscent of the possessive, calculating, and value-generating and accruing subject sketched by Skeggs (2004a; 2004b; 2011).²

In what follows, I account for the ways through which the people of Santa Rosa experienced and made sense of the production of the ‘educated person’ (Levinson & Holland 1996). Whilst education was spoken of as a transmission from parents to children, it was acknowledged as an accomplishment of children themselves. Children had to bear and endure the difficulties of striving for educational attainment, whilst contending with the authority and expectations of parents and other adults. At the same time, they had to suffer with and make sacrifices for their siblings. The language used by the people I worked with suggests that the notion of education as an inheritance was shaped by religious ideas as much as it was by economic and political history.

Although orientated towards the creation of a better future for children, the pursuit of education was also about parents’ desire to make up for a history of marginality and loss. Children were to redeem their parents at a time of expanded educational opportunities. At the same time, describing their children’s education as an inheritance was a way for parents to stake claims on their children’s achievements, and thereby gain status and prestige, especially in later life.

As an inheritance, education was expected to connect generations and siblings. Yet, it also generated fissures in relations, especially when children and

² The question of why and how education in the Philippines and elsewhere had come to be described as an ‘investment’ is a study in its own right. Part of the explanation, I suspect, lies in the rise of ‘human capital theory’ in economics and that discipline’s enduring influence within and beyond the human and social sciences. It would be interesting to trace how notions of ‘investment’ have been deployed within economic anthropology and other disciplinary subfields, including how such deployment might have reproduced particular assumptions regarding personhood and the economy.

siblings did not conform to expectations surrounding educational achievements. Moreover, since the pursuit of education not only depended on, but also amplified, class differences, educational achievements also heightened such differences, even amongst kin. This amplification often took the form of moral judgments that foregrounded the role of individuals, but occluded the material and social underpinnings of educational achievements.

World of education

Lining the wall of the Mahilways' main house's first floor foyer, which overlooked the receiving area on the ground floor, were framed photographs of the siblings (with the exception of one brother; see Chapter 5) and a paternal cousin who grew up with them. Surrounded by these photographs was another framed image, that of Lolo Minong and Lola Ising. Displaying children's graduation pictures was certainly not peculiar to the Mahilways. Most of the other families that I came to know in Santa Rosa did the same, with framed degree certificates—'diplomas' in Philippine English—oftentimes displayed alongside the pictures.³

Yet, what was particularly vivid and interesting with the images displayed in the Mahilways' house was the juxtaposition between the pictures of the siblings and their cousin and that of their parents, and aunt and uncle. The former, all black and white, had those in them wearing graduation gowns, and were taken in commercial photography studios prior to actual graduation ceremonies, presumably for inclusion in yearbooks. The latter, coloured, did not have the couple wearing graduation gowns, for they did not attend university, albeit it was taken during one of the siblings' graduation. Moreover, the inclusion of the latter was a more recent

³ This practice appears to have been widespread not just in Iloilo, but also elsewhere in the Philippines. In my maternal grandparents' house in Iriga, a city in the Bicol region of Luzon island, where I spent my childhood and teenage years in the late 1980s and the 1990s, my mother's degree certificate and those of her siblings were prominently displayed in the living room. Perhaps reflecting the fact that my mother was the first in the family to graduate from university, and the only one to attend the state-run University of the Philippines in Diliman, her certificate was placed above those of her siblings. I recall seeing similar displays in our neighbours' and my school mates' houses.

development, for in the past, only the former set of images was displayed on that wall. The juxtaposition between these two sets of images is significant, I argue, for it directs attention to the relation between educational achievements and ties between parents and their children. It also foregrounds generational shifts in the availability and value of educational opportunities.

For Lola Ising and other older residents of Santa Rosa, sending their children to school and university was a way of making up for deficiencies and missed opportunities. Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's generation—those born in the 1900s and 1910s, who got married in the 1920s and 1930s, and completed childbearing between the 1940s and the 1950s—grew up in an Iloilo where the importance of education was becoming more entrenched, and where attending school and university was becoming a real possibility for more people, whilst, at the same time, there remained considerable constraints to becoming educated. Such entrenchment and wider participation became even more heightened after the war, when Lola Ising's and her contemporaries' children came of age.

As historians have documented, there were limited educational opportunities during the Spanish colonial period (see, for example, Alzona 1932). For the most part, education was subsumed by missionary efforts to proselytise the natives. As such, missionaries emphasised instruction in Catholic teachings, scriptures, prayers, and conduct. Notably, resulting from Spain's experiences in the Americas, evangelisation used local languages, and not Castilian, with profound consequences for the natives' (*indios*) reception of and response to Catholicism and Spanish colonial rule (Rafael 1993 [1988]). Along with limitations in resources, this policy ensured that when Spain transferred sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States in 1898, only a very small minority were fluent in the colonial language, notwithstanding popular interest (*ibid*; see also Cannell 2006).

It was not until 1863, four decades after the independence of Mexico (through which Madrid had ruled the Philippines), and amidst tumult in the colonial metropole, that the Spanish government decreed the establishment in the colony of an elementary education system under the control not of the clergy, but of the civil government. Two years later, another decree was issued ordering the establishment of a secondary school system. Due to material constraints, as well as opposition from

friars, the implementation of these decrees was limited. Most of the local population remained unschooled or had very little education.

Several educational institutions, it is true, were established over the course of the Spanish colonial period, mainly by religious orders, such as the Jesuits and the Dominicans (Alzona 1932; see also Santiago 1991). However, these institutions were originally restricted to Spaniards and Spanish *mestizos*, and it was not until the end of the 17th century, in the aftermath of a popular revolt, that *indio* and Chinese *mestizo* men were allowed admission (Santiago 1991). Women were restricted to colleges dedicated to teaching ‘feminine’ virtues that would prepare them for family life (Camacho 2007).

Especially for the *principalía*, the pre-colonial elite that became local leaders and tribute collectors under Spanish rule, this development paved the way to degrees in arts, law, and theology (Majul 1977). Indeed, priesthood, which became open to non-Spaniards, was an avenue for the local elite to expand and consolidate its power and status, although racial barriers limited their ambitions, thus eventually shaping an incipient nationalism (Schumacher 1981; 1991; 2003).

Meanwhile, the educational reforms of 1863, the establishment of normal (teachers’ training) schools in the subsequent years, and the opening in 1875 of degree programmes in medicine and pharmacy provided the *principalía*, as well as the emerging landed *mestizo* class (see Chapter 1), again mainly the men, with access to professional alternatives to priesthood (Majul 1977). One notable exception was the teaching profession, as women’s colleges were authorised to offer normal courses. From 1871, normal schools for women were established in Manila and Nueva Caceres (Alzona 1932: chap. 5).

By this time, buoyed by the insertion of the Philippines into world trade, and in the face of dissatisfaction with local education, children of *principalía* and *mestizo* families were now able to go to Spain and elsewhere in Europe for their studies. There they met other intellectuals from what had remained of the Spanish empire, and imbibed liberal ideas, and both encounters helped shape their nationalism (B. Anderson 2005; 2006 [1983]). Indeed, it was in the metropole where they came to constitute the *ilustrados*—the group of ‘enlightened’ and European-educated young men who would have a profound and lasting influence on Philippine nationalism

(see, for example, Schumacher 1997 [1973]; for recent accounts, see also Hau 2011; Lahiri 2007; Mojares 2006; M.C. Thomas 2012).

This broad historical sketch of education during the Spanish period resonates with experiences in Iloilo. In Molo, for example, amidst the economic prosperity that the town's Chinese *mestizo* residents derived first from trade, and later, sugar plantations, education also flourished. Historians of Iloilo, in fact, have emphasised how Molo was considered as the 'Athens of the Philippines' given the number of educated persons that it produced during the late Spanish period, and who, in the succeeding decades, would assume prominent positions, such as Supreme Court chief justice, senator, and cabinet minister (Claparols 1968; Funtecha 1992; 2009; Salvilla 2007).

To begin with, some of Molo's *mestizo* residents attended universities in Manila and Spain. In Chapter 1, we encountered Don Miguel L. and Don Estanislao Yusay, who both studied in Manila, although the former went on to university in Spain. In addition, a few schools and colleges were established in the town by its educated *mestizos*. To cite one example, the Instituto de Molo, a school that instructed children from elite families in Iloilo and Negros, was founded by a group of educated *mestizos*, including the prominent Don Raymundo Melliza, who received his degrees in law from universities in Manila and Sevilla. In Spain, he became friends with José Rizal, who would become the Philippines' national hero, and who would visit him in Molo in 1896; he was a leader during the revolution against Spain, and during the American occupation, he became governor of the province (Funtecha 2007; 2009; Manuel 1995: 335-36; P. Reyes 1908: 33).

As with the rest of the Philippines, education in Iloilo during the late Spanish period was limited to those of affluent circumstances. The schools and colleges established by the *mestizos* were, of course, fee paying. Meanwhile, although there is some evidence that suggests that a few state-run schools operated in the province (F.W. Fox 1954), Lola Ising and her generational contemporaries did not recall their parents and grandparents having obtained formal education.

It was not until the American colonial period that education became more accessible, for the new overlords made mass education a priority as part of their civilising mission (see May 1976). In the beginning, soldiers were asked to teach

children in areas that had fallen under their control. In 1901, however, groups of American teachers started to arrive in the Philippines (see Pecson & Racelis 1959; Racelis & Ick 2001). Moreover, the colonial government proceeded to establish schools throughout the country, including those for the training of teachers (see Alzona 1932). In La Paz, the Iloilo Provincial Normal School was established in 1902 to mould future pedagogues, although at first it was part of the Iloilo High School, and only in 1924 did it become a separate institution.⁴ Meanwhile, primary and intermediate schools were opened in the following years.⁵ In other parts of urban Iloilo, private educational institutions were also established, including the Assumption School (1910), the Colegio de San Agustin (1917), the Colegio de Santo Angel (1936), the Iloilo Mission Hospital School of Nursing (1906), and Jaro Industrial School (1905). As the names suggest, the first four had Catholic provenance; the latter two were founded by Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries.

Often overlooked in narrations of the history of education in the Philippines, but salient in the history of Iloilo, is the establishment in 1905 of the Baluarte Elementary School near Molo's coast. This was the school that older residents of Santa Rosa and surrounding villages attended. It was not until the eve of the Japanese occupation that a satellite primary school was established in the village. Even then, villagers continued to go to Baluarte School to attend intermediate grades, as it was only in the 1960s that the school in Santa Rosa became a fully-fledged elementary school.

The origins of the Baluarte Elementary School are traced to the efforts of Rosendo Mejica, a Moleño accountant who organised residents of the coastal area into the *Mga Baybayanon* (The Shore Dwellers), which, according to McCoy (1982c: 82), was Iloilo's 'earliest significant mutual aid society,' at least as far as the working classes were concerned.⁶ The association raised funds and petitioned the city

⁴ <http://wvus.edu.ph/index.php/about/history>, accessed 11 January 2017.

⁵ See, for instance, *Makinaugalingon*, 5 September 1914: 3; 6 October 1914: 3; 3 June 1915: 4; 15 January 1924: 2.

⁶ A list of the society's 62 members and officers, and of the 34 donors who contributed to the construction of the school, is kept on display at the Rosendo Mejica Museum (the family's old residence) in Iloilo City.

government for the establishment of the school. The school thus came to have the distinction of being the first public school building erected during the American period, the construction of which predated the 1907 Gabaldon Law—one of the first pieces of legislation passed by the American-era Philippine Assembly—that appropriated funds for the construction of school buildings throughout the colony (see Osias 1921: 3-5).⁷

Biographical accounts of Mejica indicate that his dedication to the school, and to the plight of the working classes more generally, stemmed from his personal trajectory (Andrada 1998; French 1998; Sonza 1972). Whilst his parents, both travelling merchants, sought to give him education by paying for his lessons, his education was truncated due to financial difficulties, forcing him to work a series of jobs, including being a farmhand in a sugar *hacienda* in Negros, to save money. Eventually, he earned a qualification as *perito mercantil* (chartered accountant), thus starting his career as bookkeeper and accountant for commercial firms and *hacenderos* in Iloilo and Negros, before returning to Molo to start a career as labour organiser, writer and publisher, and municipal councillor.

Significantly, Mejica published the tri-weekly Hiligaynon newspaper *Makinaugalingon*.⁸ It ran from 1913 until 1941, making it the longest-running and most widely read vernacular newspaper at that time, and because of the language that it used, and the contents that it published, it was known as the ‘newspaper of the poor’ (McCoy 1982c: 184-85).⁹ It regularly featured, amongst others, articles highlighting the importance of education and discussing the state of schools and the plight of students and teachers in Iloilo.¹⁰ The newspaper also published articles on the

⁷ ‘Public school’ in this thesis refers to a state-run school, and not, as in the English case, to an independent and fee-paying school. I use it interchangeably with ‘state school.’

⁸ Reflecting the prevailing orthography of that time, the newspaper’s name was spelled, at least on the masthead, as *Makinaugalingón*.

⁹ McCoy (1982c), unfortunately, does not give exact circulation figures, and I am thus far unable to locate other sources that may shed light on this issue. However, he says, following the *Cebu-Visayas Directory* published in 1932, that in 1931, the weekly circulation of Visayan language newspapers was 12,180. He describes Iloilo as having ‘a remarkably high readership for an urban population of only 100,000’ (ibid: 166).

¹⁰ For instance, it published editorials addressed to the youth, as well as their parents, emphasising the importance of education, particularly reading. Notably, the articles on education that it published

accomplishments of educated Ilonggos and Panayanons.¹¹ Indeed, as an index of the newspaper's contents suggests, education as a topic was amply represented on its pages (Piamonte 1980).

18

1937 ALMANAKE SANG MAKINAUGALINGON

DR. DANIEL LEDESMA
Graduado sa Universidad sa Zurich, Suiza.
 Pagkilala kag pagpamulúng sang balatian sa paagi sa RAYOS X.
 Pagpamulúng sa paagi sa RADIUM.
 Pagkilala kag pagpamulúng sa balatian sa ANUS.

Telefono 484 **Ilong-ilong** **No. 1 Dalan Iznart**

Panahun	FEBRERO	Tuig 1937	DAGANGKAHUY	28 ca adlaw
<p>Ma- naw. Ma- madlus ang hangin cag ma- cusug ang unús. Mali- naw</p>	<p>1 Lun. Stos. Ignacio, Cecilio obs. Efrén kag Brigida ul. mres. 1814—Pagtuga sang bolkan Mayon sa Albay.</p> <p>2 Mart. <i>La Purificacion de Ntra. Sra.</i> Stos. Apolonio mr. kag Cornelio ob. conf. (Piesta sang Ntra. Sra. de la Candelaria sa Salog, Ilong-ilong kag San Enrique kag Tinubagan, Neg. Occ.</p> <p>3 Mier. Stos. Blas, ob. mr. Celerina, Laurente kag Tigido ob. ☾ PAHIMATAYUN sa ika 8:04 ang takna sa gab-i.</p> <p>4 Juev. Stos. Andres Corsino ob. Juana kag Jose de Leonisa cfres. <i>Pagsugud sang inaway sang mga pilipinhon kag amerikanhon, 1899.</i></p> <p>5 Vier. Stos. Pedro Bautista, Albino ob. cf. kag Agueda ulay martir</p> <p>6 Sab. Stos. Amando, Silvino Vedasto obs. kag Dorotea ul. martir.</p> <p>7 Dom. <i>Quincuagesima</i> Stos. Romualdo ab. Ricardo hari kag Juliana balo.</p> <p>8 Lun. <i>Carnestolendas (Ntra. Sra. del Sol Hermoso)</i> Stos. Juan Mata cf. fund. Dionisio, Emiliano kag Sebastian mrs. Ntra. Sra. del Divino Consejo.</p>			

Con equipos modernos. Maquinas para graduar lentes Esterico y Cilindrico. Cuatro años de experiencia con Clark y Co., Manila. Oficina Plazuela Gay Ledesma St. Iloilo Residencia Delgado 87

Figure 12. A doctor's advertisement. Courtesy of the Center for Western Visayas Studies, University of the Philippines in the Visayas.

included translations of texts originally published in English, and which referenced American and European thinkers. See, for example, *Makinaugalingon*, 22 August 1922: 3; 24 July 1923: 1.

¹¹ As an example, it reported in 1919 that one Crispulo Garsulao from Sibalom, Antique, a '*pamatan-on nga mainuswagon*' (progressive young man), had ventured to the US to pursue a degree in civil engineering at the University of California. On the same page, it reported that the young doctor Cornelio Consing had left for Manila, where he would board a ship for the US, where in turn, he would study the most recent medical treatments. The following year, it published lists of those who had graduated from Baluarte Elementary School, and of Western Visayans who had earned their degrees from the state-run University of the Philippines. See *Makinaugalingon*, 2 July 1919: 4; 7 April 1920: 1; 10 April 1920: 1.

In addition, Mejica published from 1915 to 1952 the *Almanake sang Makinaugalingon*, an annual calendar containing feasts of saints, as well as astronomical and astrological data.¹² It also contained short essays and literary pieces, again including those on education. Advertisements of schools and colleges, and of educated persons and professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and pharmacists, were likewise found on its pages (see Figure 12). Whilst there are no extant circulation figures, and although a rival calendar appeared to have been more popular, *Almanake sang Makinaugalingon* was popular enough to outlast its sister publication by almost a decade.¹³

Taken together, the establishment of schools (particularly the Baluarte School), the regular dissemination of articles on education in widely-read publications, and Mejica's biography itself, suggest that education was very much in the imagination of Ilonggos. The fast expanding world of education, however, was not fully accessible to Lola Ising, Lolo Minong, and their generational contemporaries. Lola Ising, who was, as I described in the previous chapter, born in 1919 to farmer parents in a town to the north of Iloilo City, only managed to finish primary school (grade four) at a state-run school established in 1924 at the behest of Don Ignacio Arroyo, the owner of several parcels of land in Iloilo and Negros.¹⁴ She then stopped, for her father died soon after she finished primary school. Lolo Minong, who was born of a similar peasant background but ten years earlier than his wife, completed intermediate school but did not pursue further studies.

¹² Calendars and almanacs were particularly popular in the Philippines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For accounts of how people produced and used calendars and almanacs, see Aguilar (2013b: 320), Aguilar *et al.* (2009: 76-77; 129), Gealogo (2010), McCoy (1982c), Mojares (2006: 333-34), and Sonza (2012).

¹³ The rival calendar was *Almanaque Panayanhon*, published annually since 1884 until the present. McCoy (1982c) reports that in 1916, it had a print run of 40,000, and in 1982, it was the most circulated publication in Western Visayas. One key difference between the *Almanaque Panayanhon* and *Almanake sang Makinaugalingon* is that the former has details on the shifting orientation (i.e. where it faces in each period), of the *bakunawa*, the large snake believed to cause eclipses, and whose orientation has repercussions for house building and other important activities. This difference could have been behind *Almanaque Panayanhon*'s popularity. McCoy links the *bakunawa* to the wider Southeast Asian belief on the *naga* serpent, itself linked to the region's 'Indianisation' (ibid). See also Sonza (2012).

¹⁴ *Makinaugalingon*, 15 January 1924: 2. For an account of Don Ignacio's various donations, including the family conflicts it triggered, see Tirol's (1994) undergraduate dissertation, a copy of which is kept at the Center for West Visayan Studies of the University of the Philippines in the Visayas.

Repeatedly, I was told that during Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's time, it was unusual for most parents, particularly those of peasant background, to send their children beyond primary school, as most intermediate and secondary schools were not yet established. Finishing intermediate school, it was claimed, already qualified a person to teach in the schools founded by the American colonial government.¹⁵ Indeed, in an evaluation conducted in 1925, it was established that the colonial public school system attracted and retained a limited proportion of school-age children; that in addition to staying in school for less than three years on average, most of these children enrolled at a mature age and tended to repeat grades; and that an overwhelming 95 per cent of enrolled students were in the elementary grades (Board of Educational Survey 1925).¹⁶

Historians have identified various reasons that account for the public school system's limited effectivity, including, material and human resource constraints on the part of the colonial government; ideological clashes and abrupt policy changes regarding the orientation of education in the islands (i.e. whether it should emphasise academic or industrial training); inconsistencies on the part of American teachers; but also because for many rural families, the agrarian economy continued to provide security (Margold 1995a; May 1976). Yet, despite its limited effectivity, the public education system did instil education as a normative goal. As Margold (1995a: 389-90) points out, the system produced exemplars of those who successfully pursued social mobility through education, and it produced a cadre of Filipino pedagogues who would reinforce the value of education (see also Claudio 2015).

¹⁵ Prior to 1918, given the lack of trained teachers in the archipelago, intermediate schools offered courses in teaching (Alzona 1932: 203-4). Meanwhile, before 1928, the normal schools only required that prospective students must have completed the intermediate course and were at least 14 years old (ibid: chap. 17). As the case of the Iloilo Provincial Normal School discussed above indicates, normal schools were considered part of the secondary education system. It was not after the war that elementary education became a college subject (see Chapter 3).

¹⁶ The same evaluation specifies that less than one-third of children of primary-school age (7 to 10 years old) were in school, whilst for children of intermediate-school age (11 to 13), the corresponding figures were more than 50 per cent for boys and more than 40 per cent for girls; a much smaller 5.6 per cent of children aged 14 to 17 were in public high schools (Board of Educational Survey 1925). The evaluation does not give separate figures for specific provinces. However, in a separate report published in the following year, Iloilo province is reported as having 33 per cent of its school-age population attending state schools (Bureau of Education 1926: 94).

In the case of Iloilo, the enduring impact of public education introduced by the Americans may be gleaned in several ways. Lolo Minong's very description of education as an inheritance that cannot be stolen evokes the ideas of David P. Barrows, the longest-serving Director of Education under the Americans. Barrows (1907) advocated for universal primary education as a means of freeing peasants from abusive landlords who, in his view, took advantage of the peasants' lack of education to keep them indebted and tied to the land. As I discussed in the previous chapter, during my fieldwork I encountered stories and rumours of elite families coming to own parcels of land that did not belong to them—an outcome that my interlocutors explicitly connected to the illiteracy of the older generations, as well as the elites' knowledge of the law and their connections to state functionaries. The idea that education was potentially liberating must have been so widespread that in an overview of Philippine education published in 1980, the expression 'learning is wealth that cannot be stolen' was reported as a Tagalog proverb (Cortes 1980: 145).¹⁷

There too was the formation of a professional class that was distinct from the landed *mestizos* (see Leichter 1975: 22-23). Although, as I have indicated, professional fields such as law and medicine were the exclusive province of the children of the affluent, a number of those from humbler origins did manage to make their way to the professions, as Mejica, discussed above, exemplifies. Moreover, the formation of a professional class was stimulated by the American policy of democratic tutelage through the 'Filipinisation' of the colonial state, including political offices and the bureaucracy. The state school system itself contributed to the formation of the professional class, as it employed a considerable number of Filipino teachers, an issue that I return to in the next chapter.

¹⁷ A slightly different, but still evocative version of Barrows's idea, 'education will set you free,' was what my school teachers in Bicol in the 1990s taught me and my class mates.

Claims of achievement

Most of the Mahilway siblings were born after the Liberation of the Philippines in 1945, although the eldest, Tita Mila, was born in 1938, followed by Tita Dolor in 1940, and by Tita Remy, who was born in 1942 whilst the family was hiding in the mountains of Tigbauan, a town more than 20 kilometres to the west of Iloilo City. These first three daughters, however, did not have to attend school until after Liberation. When classes resumed, the Mahilways attended the primary school in Santa Rosa, the intermediate school in Baluarte, and the public high school in the town proper of Molo (the Iloilo City High School), which was established in 1941. The siblings eventually attended university, with most of them going to San Agustin and the rest to what, by the time of my fieldwork, was known as the Western Visayas State University. As was the case elsewhere in the Philippines, state provision for higher education was limited, with private institutions dominating the landscape.

For the immediate post-war generation, educational achievements were often made sense of not just in relation to their parents' lack of or limited achievements, but also to that of the age-set that came of age just before the onset of the war (those born between the late 1920s and 1930s). This latter age-set had to contend with the displacements brought about by the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, which lasted from 1942 until 1945. Many residents of Iloilo City at that time evacuated to the countryside and the neighbouring islands of Guimaras and Negros, often moving from one place to another in search of scarce food and to evade Japanese forces. Those who were already attending school during this time had their studies disrupted, whilst some schools were also burnt to the ground during the war, as was the case with the primary school in Santa Rosa. After the Liberation, some of the displaced students returned to school, although there were those who opted not to, as they felt too old to join their new classmates, and chose instead to work in the farms or elsewhere, and eventually started their own families. Lola Soling, whom we met briefly in the previous chapter, was one of these individuals.

It also bears recalling the state of Iloilo's economy after the war. As I elaborated in the Introduction, Iloilo's economy languished after the war, partly because of the city's attenuated ties to the sugar industry in Negros. This was the era

when the disappearance of Molo's and Iloilo's fabled *mestizo* elite started to be felt. At the same time, although agriculture continued to matter, as it did in Santa Rosa, opportunities in the bureaucracy (now under the full control of Filipino politicians), the public school system, and in the emerging industries in Manila and other urban centres beckoned, and access to these opportunities was largely contingent on having the right qualifications.

To have no or limited education during this time was, in many ways, to be incomplete. One lacked the knowledge and the skills to navigate and participate in a world increasingly structured by practices of literacy, a lack foregrounded to me by my older interlocutors whose births were not registered, or were registered late and only because of the intercession of educated co-villagers. Absence of, or limited, schooling also translated to diminished opportunities: paths to new professions and lines of occupation were blocked, and the possibility of marrying someone from a non-peasant background was rather dim.

For residents of Santa Rosa, lack of education meant a life spent working in the fields, the river, or the sea; or selling produce either in the city or in the nearby villages, often on foot. Some resorted to cooking and selling food to neighbours, whilst others worked as drivers, laundresses, or maids. A few worked as sales ladies in stores owned by Iloilo's new Chinese merchants. Meanwhile, several male villagers worked as porters, dockers, and *commisionistas* (those who earned by securing passengers for shipping lines) on the city's waterfront, which in those years was considered as Iloilo's underbelly—aside from the backbreaking labour, these men had to struggle (at times violently) against competing groups of labourers, as well as criminals and other unsavoury characters (McCoy 1977: chap. 8).

In recalling their educational achievements, my interlocutors often deployed what I call an aesthetic of difficulty. That is, they accentuated the difficulties that they encountered and endured, and equally important, overcame along the way to educational success. For instance, it was emphasised how the Mahilway siblings' sojourn in educational institutions was far from easy, especially when more than one of them was in university. Throughout their studies, their parents urged them to persevere and think of their future. 'Persevere (*mag-antos*), for I want all of you to finish your studies,' Lola Ising recalled her husband telling their children. At other

times, she spoke of how she and Lolo Minong used to encourage their children to endure (*mag-agwanta*, from the Spanish *aguantar*) hardship.

Part of the family's *kapigadohan* (hardship, from the Spanish *pegado*), I was told, stemmed from its large household size. Aside from the Mahilway siblings and their parents, their household included at various points their paternal grandfather, their maternal grandmother, a bachelor uncle on the paternal side, and several cousins. Some farm hands also stayed with the family. Notably, Lola Ising fostered and sent to school three sets of her sibling's children and grandchildren. The first set she took in were her half-sister's (mother's first husband's daughter's) five children, who later migrated to Mindanao under the government's homestead programme. The family also took in Lola Ising's younger sister's five children—the second set of 'adoptees'—when their mother died. Later, three grandchildren from the first set of adoptees moved back to Iloilo and asked to be taken in by Lola Ising.

The Mahilway siblings often emphasised that the large household size meant considerable food expenses, and indeed substantial portions of the family's share of harvests (in the case of rice, only once a year for the most part) were consumed within the household.¹⁸ Each time they cooked rice—at least twice a day—they consumed one *gantang* (about 2.25 kilograms of milled rice). They seldom ate meat, settling instead for fish, including dried anchovies (*balingon*) and sardines (*tabagak*). These 'fringe' (Mintz 1985: 9) components were divided equally amongst members of the household; everyone had to eat at the same time, so that food could be shared equally. Eating out was rarely done, I was told. On just a few occasions Lolo Minong and Lola Ising would buy a limited amount of food from one of the city's restaurants. Upon arriving home, they would let their children eat, and only themselves partake if there were leftovers.

Given the family's limited income and sizeable expenses, the fact that the Mahilway siblings and their cousins did complete their studies—indeed, sending children to school meant additional farm labour expenses—was a source of immense pride for the family, particularly Lola Ising. When I first met her, Lola Ising declared,

¹⁸ There were no irrigation facilities in San Antonio until about the late 1960s. The rice fields in Santa Rosa and San Nicolas were rain-fed.

‘By God’s mercy, I was able to raise them through farming. The expenses for their education also came from the farm.’ Through this enunciation, Lola Ising claimed responsibility for her children’s educational success; the contributions of her husband, her brother-in-law, other kin, and of the siblings themselves quietly receded into the background.

I will discuss the siblings’ points of view in the next section, but what I would emphasise for now is the fact that other adult members of the household also played a role in the siblings’ education. As I described in the previous chapter, Lolo Minong was compelled by his congenital heart condition to take up a job as a telegram messenger after the war. His salary, as well as his income from his sideline as vendor of ice lollies and collector of bets for *jueteng*, a popular but illicit numbers game, formed a relatively small part of the household budget. His bachelor brother, Lolo Pabling, meanwhile, worked as a gardener for the city, and helped with his nieces’ and nephews’ education expenses.

One could say that Lola Ising’s claim stemmed from the fact that she was the one narrating the story, and that, just like many other women in Santa Rosa and elsewhere, she outlived her husband and her brother-in-law (in her husband’s case by three decades), and thus could easily assert being behind her children’s deeds. One could also say that the bulk of the household’s resources did come from farming, and that Lola Ising was the one who managed the family’s landholdings.

When Lola Ising and I met for the second time, she told me how she had received recognition for sending her children and the three sets of foster children to school. She was given ‘model senior citizen’ and ‘mother of the year’ awards for what were deemed as her achievements. Likewise, she and other older folks were gathered in the village school and asked to narrate their life stories as part of that year’s graduation ceremony. Chuckling, she noted just how exceptional she was. ‘Nobody there matched my achievements, she said. Then, she speculated: ‘maybe no one will be able to follow in my footsteps.’ In looking back, Lola Ising considered her children’s educational achievements as her own prize in life. ‘It was a difficult life (*mabudlay nga pangabuhì*) but we persevered so that the children could finish their studies. That’s my reward for all the hardship.’

Later, when I told Tita Amy about my conversation with her mother, she agreed and emphasised that even if their parents did not accomplish much in terms of their own education, they compensated for this by sending her and her siblings to school and university. In articulating this idea, Tita Amy used the expression '*ginbáwì sa kabataan*,' which, in this instance, may be glossed as 'they compensated through their children.' In fact, I heard this expression throughout my stay in Santa Rosa, every time my interlocutors talked about parents with little or no education but who strived to endow their children with educational success. Children in this sense were their parents' substitutes, gaining for the latter achievements that were difficult if not impossible to achieve in the past; the children's present and future were battlegrounds for reversing incurred losses and foreclosed gains. Educated children, as successful substitutes, were effectively transformations of their parents.

In Santa Rosa, I found that alongside the emphasis on siblingship, there too was a considerable elaboration of and prominence given to parenthood and hierarchical parent-child ties. This was unlike the situation of the Buid described by Gibson (1994), where domination of children by their parents and other adults was minimised and avoided. In Chapter 1, we had a glimpse of parenthood's importance when I discussed how the death of parents were regarded as potentially ominous to sibling ties, as they, the parents, were likened to strings that hold siblings together.

Here, I add that in a way that resonates with other lowland and Christian areas of the Philippines, the people I spoke with often underscored that children owed a debt of gratitude, known locally as *utang nga kabalaslan*, to their parents, particularly their mothers, for the gift of life (see Hollnsteiner 1973 [1962]; Kaut 1961).¹⁹ In this vein, it makes sense that parents as a collective were often referred to as *ginikanan* (literally, from where one comes from). Indeed, in his discussion of the Tagalog correlate *utang na loob*, Rafael (1993 [1988]) underscores how the *loob* (lit. 'inside'; also 'inner self') is formed in and through the circulation of debt. This suggests that personhood is formed through what one gives to and receives from others. Being a parent and being a child, therefore, are enabled by what is transmitted by the former and thus owed by the latter.

¹⁹ *Utang* means debt, whilst *kabalaslan* is from *balus*, to return, pay back, respond.

Moreover, children's debt of gratitude, was considered something that must be acknowledged and reciprocated, but is ultimately unpayable. That is, children were bound to their parents for the whole of their lives, and indeed, even after their parents have passed away; children should obey and show respect to their parents, and failure to do so meant judgment and a diminished stature for the erring child. The unpayable characteristic of children's debts of gratitude thus implied a hierarchical relation between them and their parents. At the same time, there was a recognition that the hierarchical was somehow attenuated when children marry, form their own households, beget their own children, and therefore become full adults. This is a theme that I will return to below and in succeeding chapters.

From a slightly different angle, residents of Santa Rosa at times emphasised how, because of consubstantiality (often expressed through 'blood'), children, unsurprisingly and as a matter of fact, take after their parents. Proverbs like those reported by Jocano (1969: 16) for his rural Panay informants were current in Santa Rosa: '*ang batasan nasa dugo sang tawo*' (character and behaviour are in the blood) and '*kun ano ang puno, amo man ang bunga*' (whatever the tree, so is the fruit).

In fact, even if fostering and adoption were not uncommon, especially amongst siblings and cousins (a childless or more affluent person would foster or adopt the child of a sibling or cousin who had a considerable number of children, and was possibly of lower standing in life)—and in this sense, parenthood was not the exclusive province of genitors and genitrices—villagers also emphasised how ties of blood, at the end of the day, were weightier than those achieved through other means. Thus, a preference was often expressed for having birth children, for one is surer that they would take care of their elderly parents.

At the same time, people recognised the possibility that children, especially when they reach adulthood, would end up different from their parents. As one woman expressed in relation to her son, who, despite her best efforts, left his wife and child and carried on an affair with a woman of ill repute, 'you know, he's my son and he's of my body, but he has his own mind.'

There too was the recognition that although children owed their lives to their parents, they also gave a sense of completion to their forebears. This was conveyed, for instance, through the idea, common elsewhere in the Philippines and Southeast

Asia, that children enliven houses; that marriages without children are, in a sense, unfinished; and that, in their old age, parents depend on their children (Aguilar *et al.* 2009; Allerton 2012; 2013: 54; Carsten 1997: chap. 2; Jocano 1969: 14-15; 1983: 160). In addition, there was a sense amongst the people I came to know that, in later life, a person's achievements and standing were adjudged both by themselves and others based on what had become of their children and other descendants. Such a view is analogous to the way elderly Vezos' sense of personhood emerges from being able to claim a multitude of descendants (Astuti 2000).

These different, and at times, seemingly contradictory, statements about ties of filiation call to mind Astuti's (2000; 2009) suggestion to be mindful of the ways in which notions of descent are deployed, elaborated, or perhaps minimised in given contexts. In the case of the mother of the philandering husband mentioned above, for example, she was intent on minimising links between herself and her son given the moral, as well as class, implications of her son's unfaithfulness.

To return to the issue that I sketched at the beginning of this chapter, the different images of parenthood and parent-child relations of my interlocutors imply that to speak of education as a bequest of parents to their children is irreducible to notions of 'investment' or 'establishment fund' as earlier scholars have argued. It is also, as I have already discussed in the previous section, rooted in historically specific conditions that convey prestige and value in education. Moreover, it is underpinned by a view that accentuates how personhood is firmly rooted in relationships. If, in the previous chapter, we have seen through the notion of *dungan* (soul, also double) how persons are both individuals and always already within siblingship, here, we see how parents and children implicate one another. To the extent that education accrues prestige and value, parents with limited education claim their children's achievements as theirs, and in this way, the entwinedness of parents and children is accentuated.

I should also say that for the immediate post-war generation, describing education as an inheritance indexed parents' power over their children in a way that evokes how the Bicolanos that Cannell (1999: 53) worked with described the past as an 'Age of the Father.' I have already alluded to how it was farming, an activity

managed by Lola Ising but predicated on Lolo Minong's ties to landowners (see Chapter 1), that provided for the Mahilway siblings' expenses.

Equally important, as Lolo Minong's plea for perseverance amongst his children reveals, the Mahilway siblings had to contend with parental expectations—and control—whilst pursuing the path to education. A well-remembered aspect of their childhood revolves around the curfew that was strictly imposed by parents and other adults. At six in the evening, everyone had to be home for the Angelus, and only those who had night classes were exempted from this rule. Likewise, parents and other older relatives were to be respected and their instructions heeded; talking back was unacceptable and always met with physical punishment.

Lolo Minong, owing to his heart condition, did not play the role of disciplinarian in the family, a role often associated with fathers. Lola Ising, although stricter than her husband, was constrained by her farming duties from being fully immersed in disciplining their children. The role of disciplinarian was played instead by Lolo Pabling, Lolo Minong's bachelor brother. Known for being severe and rather authoritarian, Lolo Pabling was called 'Hitler' by his nieces and nephews. He was particularly remembered for having a different wooden stick for each of his nieces and nephews. Whenever one of the Mahilway siblings committed a mistake or failed to do an assigned task, Lolo Pabling would ask the erring sibling to fetch his or her assigned wooden stick, which he would then use as a punishment.

With the possibility of being punished ever looming, apart from their brother Tito Nestor (and later, Tito Benjie and Tita Olive), whose stories I narrate later in the thesis, the siblings led a circumscribed life. For the most part, their lives revolved around the house, the farm, and the school or university. They were often restricted from going out with friends, for example, and their parents and uncle preferred that their friends came over instead—not only would the siblings stay at home, but their parents and uncle would also get the chance to know and vet their friends. One notable exception to this restriction was the siblings' active participation in the young parishioners' group established by a local priest. On the whole, because of the restrictions set by their parents and uncle, the Mahilway siblings had very few distractions to their studies.

Furthermore, parent-child relations were inflected by gendered ideals. Here, I want to suggest that Lola Ising's claim was also consistent with a view expressed by many of my informants that the responsibility of looking after children's future—including matters pertaining to their schooling—is squarely lodged with mothers. 'The future of children depends on mothers.' 'If a mother doesn't know how to look after her family and her children, nothing good will happen.' These are statements that I heard regularly throughout my time in Santa Rosa. Thus, it was common for mothers in the village to take on multiple jobs or means of livelihood—known locally as working 'double time'—to support their children. Fathers, whilst usually described as the providers of families, because of what was considered as a general male propensity to vice and irresponsibility (see Chapter 5), were also seen as less likely to devote considerable effort to securing their children's future.

Finally, I highlight that the transmission of education from parents to their children—and therefore, journeys of upward mobility—had a religious register. The word '*báwì*,' as we have seen, was used to describe how parents sought to provide their children with educational opportunities. I have above glossed it as to mean 'to compensate.' The word, however, carries with it a range of other meanings. In Kaufmann's (1900) dictionary, the word's meanings are: 'to redeem, reclaim, deliver, free, save, set at liberty, liberate, release.' The examples indicated include those pertaining to debt and mortgage, and tellingly, also redemption from sin and damnation.²⁰ Just as precolonial notions of debt of gratitude had been inflected with Catholicism (Rafael 1993 [1988]), *báwì*, and thus education, appear to have been transformed and linked to Catholic soteriological ideas.

I would caution, however, against reducing *báwì* to Catholic influence. Notably, an earlier dictionary (Méntrida 1841: 60) links *báwì*, in addition to the meanings identified by Kaufmann, to acts of healing and deliverance, including those concerning physical affliction and cases of bewitchment and ensnarement by malevolent spirits. These acts of healing, the dictionary tells us, were performed by the *babaylan*, a shaman. In fact, ethnographic accounts of Panay, which do not refer

²⁰ For instance: '*Ibáwì mo iníng pílak sa ímo dítà*' (Use this money to claim your land) and '*Gimbáwì kitá ní Hesukrísto sa salá kag sa inpiérno*' (Jesus Christ redeemed us from sin and hell).

to the Méntrida dictionary, indicate that until at least the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the rural areas of the island, *babaylans* continued to perform the healing ritual called *bawi*, which was meant to retrieve a person's *dungan* that had been captured by a malevolent spirit or witch (Magos 1992: 40-41; Ponteras 1980: 125). Moreover, as Cannell (2005b) has argued, the introduction of mass education by the American colonial government was informed by an unrecognised desire to craft Protestant ideals amongst Filipinos, who the colonisers sought to redeem from what was condemned as their Catholic superstitions.

These semantic possibilities and histories suggest that, in so far as education was seen as a means of instantiating *báwì*, not only did speaking of education as an inheritance index notions of parent-child ties and the history of education in the Philippines, but it also highlighted how education may have been seen as involving the core of a person's being, the soul, or the *dungan*. Hence, the supposed inalienability of education not only makes sense in relation to the history of land ownership and dispossession discussed earlier in the thesis, but also in relation to the fact that it is, as it were, written into and comes to shape a person's being.

It is in fact the case that in several Philippine settings, knowledge—of which, formal education may be considered a specific kind—has been documented as related to social adulthood and therefore autonomy as well as authority, as Michelle Rosaldo's (1980) ethnography makes clear (see also Aguilar *et al.* 2009; Nydegger & Nydegger 1966). Parallels may also be made with the specialised knowledge of the *babaylan* and other kinds of healers, who, in the Kinaray-a-speaking parts of Western Visayas, are known as *ma-aram* (knowledgeable or wise) (Magos 1992). As the association with adulthood and shamanism evokes, becoming knowledgeable is not just about external recognition, but also indicative and even constitutive of profound transformations in personhood.

Ilonggo personhood, however, is as much firmly rooted in relations, including filial ties, as I have thus far discussed, and projects of autonomy, which I have already alluded to and will elaborate below and in later chapters. Importantly, the relational character of Ilonggo personhood is not just in terms of parenthood and childhood, but as the notion of *dungan* suggests, always already about siblingship.

Enduring selves, sacrificing siblings

In recalling the difficulties that littered the path to educational achievements, it was not just the role of parents that my interlocutors emphasised. Especially for those of the post-war generation itself, much importance was given to their own striving. Yet, as will become obvious in this and the next section, their accounts also made clear how their endeavours occurred within the context of siblingship. Indeed, to the extent that they had to endure and overcome various difficulties, they did so *with* and, not unusually, *for* siblings.

One form that the perseverance that Lolo Minong exhorted amongst his children took was physical: walking to school, be it in Baluarte, the town centre of Molo, Iloilo City proper (where the San Agustin campus was located), or the district of La Paz town (where the Iloilo Normal School was). The distances to the school were considerable. From the Mahilways' house, Baluarte Elementary School was a mile away; the City High School, slightly more than a mile and a half; San Agustin was about 3 miles away; and Iloilo Normal School was further away at almost 5 miles.

Although all the siblings experienced walking to and from school or university, this experience was more pronounced and difficult for the older ones. Unlike their younger sisters and brothers, the older ones had to walk to school starting their intermediate grades. The school in Santa Rosa had previously only offered primary grades, and it was not until Tita Amy's and Tita Monica's turn that the school expanded to intermediate levels.

Moreover, in earlier years, transportation was severely inadequate. Older residents of the village recalled that in the past, only one or two jeepneys plied the route between the village and Iloilo city proper. These jeepneys had fixed schedules and limited capacity, and so most students would opt to walk to and from school. Moreover, roads were unpaved. Students had to walk across rice fields and coconut groves that became muddy and at times flooded during the monsoon season. For the villagers of this generation, walking was a key element of how they remembered the past. It was something that characterised their everyday lives. Here, they bore resemblance to the elderly urban intellectuals of colonial Jakarta who Mrázek (2010:

125) has written of, and in whose recollections of obtaining education, and therefore becoming modern, walking considerable distances loomed large: ‘School was rarely remembered without recalling distance—even the lowest types of schools and the lowest schools’ lowest grades invoked distance.’

Even when there was a slight improvement to the available transportation—with more jeeps plying Santa Rosa—many students in the past still opted to walk. A big consideration was, of course, money. Instead of using their small allowance to pay for fares, they preferred to use it for food. Indeed, one of the fond memories shared with me by Tita Dolor was how she, her siblings and cousins, and friends would stop every day after school at a bakery owned by a Chinese family. They would buy *podpod* (toasted leftover or almost-expired bread) and munch on it on the way home. Walking, albeit physically tiring, was also something they learnt to enjoy, particularly because it gave them time to be with friends.

The small allowance given to students also meant they had to scrimp on food. Instead of buying food at school, they ate heavy (i.e. carbohydrate rich) meals at home before going to and upon returning from school. Older siblings in high school and university would bring packed lunch—usually rice with fermented (*ginamos*) or dried (*uga*) fish—wrapped in banana leaves. To avoid being teased by their classmates, they would eat lunch in the back part of the covered gym or some other secluded area of the school. Eating *ginamos* and *uga* on a frequent and regular basis was a marker of poverty, and it continued to be so during my time in the field.

To supplement the allowance that their parents gave them, and at times, to spare their parents from the need to give them allowance, the Mahilway siblings learnt to sell produce. The first three siblings, Tita Mila, Tita Dolor, and Tita Remy, for example, during weekends filled winnowing baskets with vegetables and roved through the neighbourhood and nearby villages to sell the produce. Tita Dolor, averse to carrying a winnowing basket on her head, she told me, would instead always opt to do the shouting, leaving her sisters to do the carrying. Whenever they had leftover vegetables, the siblings would walk all the way to the market in the neighbouring town of Villa de Arevalo.

Aside from selling vegetables, the siblings also helped at the farm. Apart from Tita Dolor who preferred to stay at home and cook rice for the entire household, the

Mahilway siblings participated in the harvesting of rice. The sisters, as with female farmers of the time, harvested rice using their hands. The siblings also helped with planting, attending to, and harvesting other products, like corn, peanuts, sweet potatoes, other vegetables, and coconut. Tita Mila, the oldest, would even climb coconut trees whenever they needed to harvest the fruits. Every late afternoon, the Mahilways would go around the village, to the *mananggitis* (coconut sap gatherers), to collect the family's share of the harvested sap. Each morning, Tita Remy would head to the public market in the city to sell the sap.

Like walking to and from school, helping with farming also had enjoyable, not to mention mischievous, moments. The siblings fondly recalled memories of gathering corn, peanuts, and other products without their parents knowing about it. They would gather produce from concealed portions of the field and cook these for snacks. Their parents, of course, expected to find corn or some other produce in those parts of the field, and would be surprised to see the crops or fruits missing. The coconut sap, likewise, did not escape the siblings' attention. On the way home from the *mananggitis*, they would drink from the containers, sometimes consuming a whole gallon, again to the surprise of their parents and uncles who all expected a bigger harvest. Whenever questioned, the siblings would come up with excuses, saying that the harvest for that day was only that much.

Aside from transportation and monetary constraints, students of the Mahilway siblings' generation also had to overcome another problem. As their parents and other older members of the family had limited education, if any, they received no or minimal help with their studies, forcing them to rely on themselves. The difficulty of studying was in fact compounded by the fact, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, that electricity arrived in the village only sometime in the 1960s. Thus, studying had to be done during daytime when it was not yet dark; at night, my interlocutors told me, they had to use gas lamps and Petromax lanterns, which caused soot to accumulate on their noses.

Moreover, some encountered resistance from kin who doubted the wisdom of spending limited resources on children's education. One woman who was approaching her 70s, and who I got to know well, for instance, often narrated how her uncle would tell her that she would probably end up marrying one of the young

men in the village, and as such, it was useless for her to go to school. This prompted my friend to exert effort in her studies. She thus said: 'I told myself that I've to study hard, that this is my chance. I really wanted to show them that I was worth it.' Such a motivation appeared to have worked, for she excelled in her studies, and even garnered a scholarship for a university degree. Later, she went on to complete a Master's degree at one of Iloilo's higher education institutions.

More generally, however, the parents of the post-war generation in Santa Rosa did not discriminate against daughters and favour sons when it came to educational aspirations. To the extent that gender mattered, parents appeared to have been more likely to be partial to daughters. A similar pattern has been noted by economists working in some parts of the Philippines, including rural Panay, where rice farmer parents with little or no formal education were more likely to send their daughters than their sons to school and college. This pattern has been explained in terms of men's comparative advantage in rice farming (especially given its labour intensiveness) and women's comparative advantage in non-farm work (Estudillo *et al.* 2014; Quisumbing *et al.* 2004). In Santa Rosa, however, daughters, due to their more circumscribed mobility, were seen as more likely to do better in school than their brothers (see Chapter 5).

My interlocutors' accounts sometimes gave a sense that in post-war Iloilo, the state school was an institution where the village hierarchy based on the farming economy was partly mitigated. As in those decades, all the children in the village who did attend school went to the same state schools, the lines between families with access to land and those who did not (e.g. between tenants and farm workers) were blurred. In their accounts, the Mahilway siblings spoke of how they went to school and formed friendships with contemporaries of poorer standing. In many cases, friendship with school mates built on and reinforced pre-existing ties of kinship and patronage between their parents and other villagers (see Chapter 1).

Indeed, I must emphasise that even if all my interlocutors, and not just the Mahilways, often accentuated the difficulties and toil that they experienced en route to their educational achievements, there were differences in the degrees of hardship that they faced. So, in the case of the Mahilways, the family's comparatively secure access to parcels of agricultural land meant that fees for higher education were less

daunting and could be planned for. Moreover, the siblings did not have to work as much as some of their age mates. Food was also more or less available, notwithstanding the sheer number of household members who had to share each meal—not once did they mention experiencing hunger or having had to rummage for food.

This brings to mind the story of another villager, a woman in her 50s, the youngest of four siblings, and whose father passed away when she was just two years old. When I spoke with her, she made it clear that her childhood was not an easy one. Her mother worked as a food vendor in the city's waterfront, whilst her father, when he was still alive, was a leader of the waterfront's dockworkers and porters. Just like other older residents of Santa Rosa, she experienced walking to and from school.

However, unlike the Mahilway siblings, she and her siblings had to work every day, before and after school, so they could help their widowed mother. At nine years old, she would make the rounds of the various coastal villages to sell bread and ice popsicles. Meanwhile, her older sisters accepted laundry and ironing jobs, and from time to time, they would sell vegetables in the market. Together, she and her siblings would often gather shellfish and small fish from the coast, so that by the time their mother would arrive from the waterfront, dinner would be ready.

To save money, this woman at times resorted to not eating snacks and meals at school. Instead, she made do with *sansaw*, a cold slush drink sold by street vendors. At that time, she recalled, a serving of *sansaw* only cost 10 centavos, whilst a banana cue (fried plantain with caramelised sugar) went for 25 centavos; a serving of vegetable dish and rice cost 50 centavos. Scrimping on food, along with walking to and from school, and the hard work of food vending must have taken its toll on her, so much so that, one day, when she was in high school, she fainted in the middle of class.

Two years later, and a year before she was supposed to finish her secondary education, she had to stop after their mother contracted pneumonia. She had no choice, she told me, but to become a full-time vendor. She did this for two years, after which, she returned to school. After graduation, she left for Manila, where for several years, she worked as a maid, and then waitress. During those years, she would regularly send money to help her older brother with his expenses in merchant

seafaring school. It was only after her brother had completed his studies that she went to college, but even then, she had to support herself, as her brother's income at that time could only cover part of her college expenses.

This woman's life story vividly demonstrates how siblings in Santa Rosa not only suffered with one another, but at times, suffered *for* one another. For the immediate post-war generation, siblings were expected to help each other with education expenses. Older siblings, after finishing university and finding work, were to help their younger siblings complete their studies, at times delaying courtship and marriage. Once a younger sibling had graduated and was already productively employed, it would be his or her turn to support other younger siblings. At times, one or more siblings temporarily stopped their studies, so that resources might be devoted to the one closest to graduation. Younger siblings might stop schooling in favour of their older siblings, although it was equally possible that an older sibling would elect to let younger siblings proceed with their studies whilst he or she worked to support them.

Notably, those who had helped their siblings with their educational pursuits, especially those who had delayed or even abandoned their own education, as well as marriage, were often described by my Ilonggo friends as having 'sacrificed' their future. The 'other side' (Mayblin & Course 2013) of their sacrifice was that they ought to be cared for in their later years by the siblings who benefitted from their self-sacrifice, or those siblings' children (see also Chapters 3 and 4). Similar descriptions were used for parents, particularly mothers (see previous section), who were considered as having deprived themselves of material comforts to pay for their children's education. In doing so, my Ilonggo friends drew on a language of sacrifice that is widely-shared in the Philippines. Although this language has clear Catholic roots, it has been appropriated across historical moments by different actors, including the state in recent decades; it has also permeated kinship relations (see J. Bautista 2015; Cannell 1999; Iletto 1979).

As the woman's story also suggests, dire economic circumstances often meant getting waylaid on the path to education. Indeed, when I went through the records—old, unsorted, at times mouldy, fragile, and hole-ridden—of the elementary school in Santa Rosa, I came across records of pupils who left school because, as handwritten

[illegible]

Notably, the Philippine education system has had a reputation for having a weak holding power. That is, a significant proportion of pupils who enter Grade one do not make it to Grade six, much less finish high school and college. Seen in this light, the woman whose story I recounted above was part of the small minority

amongst her cohort who did graduate from college. In 1925, only 18 per cent of pupils entering Grade one made it to Grade six; in 1960, the comparable figure was 35 per cent, and in 1970, it increased to 56 per cent, although only 25 per cent reached fourth year high school, and a much smaller 11.5 per cent finished college (Cortes 1980: 159).

To a limited extent, scholarships, subsidies, and financial assistance from the state made a difference to the lives of a select number of students from Santa Rosa, including some of the Mahilway siblings. Tita Dolor attended the Iloilo Normal School, where the fees were significantly subsidised by the national government, thus affording her an uninterrupted period of study (see Chapter 2). Her brother, Tito Benjie, was a recipient of a scholarship from the city government (see Chapter 5).

Yet, for my interlocutors—that is, those who deemed themselves and were deemed by others as successful in terms of educational pursuits—the inability to achieve educationally was seen as resulting not so much from material deprivations, but from an unwillingness to persevere. A distinction was thus made based on the presence or absence of such willingness, and such a distinction was made not only amongst neighbours, but also amongst kin.

‘It’s as if they didn’t want to have a difficult time,’ Tita Amy told me whilst we were having dinner, after my first visit to the farm. She was speaking about her maternal cousins, who, she said, did not wish to endure walking to and from school, especially under the monsoon rains; neither did they and their parents want to work extra hours to generate money for school-related expenses. They were supposedly contented with working their farms.

At this point in my fieldwork, their cousins and their uncle had recently sold their farm to the same real estate developer who had expressed interest in the Mahilway’s San Antonio property (see Chapter 1), and because they did not pursue studying and thus had no other source of income aside from the land, the payment for the farm was supposedly expended in no time. As a form of help, Tita Amy had been employing some of her cousins for the harvesting of rice.

Notably, even those who came from humbler backgrounds, but who managed to gain academic credentials, made the same distinction between themselves and those they perceived as having lacked in the willingness and desire to persevere. This was the case with the woman who fainted in school. She completed a

degree in commerce, but owing to a slightly complex marital history, which I shall not detail here, she did not practise her profession. Instead, she entered into a series of livelihood ventures, including selling Tupperware products in the 1990s, operating a corner shop, vending meat, and acting as a commissioned sales agent for real estate developments, memorial parks, and insurance companies. One evening, after I accompanied her on a debt collection run, she noted how most of those we visited earlier had not cared much about their own education in the past, or those of their children in the present. This was the reason, she explained, why her neighbours were impoverished and were likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.

Finally, I note here that the distinction based on academic achievements and the perseverance considered as necessary for such achievements not only figured horizontally, that is, between cousins and amongst contemporaries, as we have seen, but also vertically, that is, between generations. Those from the post-war generations often spoke, for example, of how those of younger generations were less driven and have taken education for granted, partly because of the availability of more resources, but also the emergence of jobs that do not require university degrees, as is the case with call centres and other business process outsourcing industries (see Patrick's story in Chapters 4 and 7).

Marriage as gluttony

If, as we have seen, enduring and persevering amidst difficulties was experienced and recalled as something done by individuals and siblings, what then are the consequences when a person fails to endure with and for their siblings? As will emerge in this section, expectations of solidarity amongst siblings in general, and in the case of educational striving more specifically, mapped onto, albeit imperfectly, the age and birth-order hierarchy implied by siblingship. Furthermore, these expectations appear to have been in tension with marriage and family formation.

The eldest of the Mahilway siblings, Tita Mila, finished a pre-nursing course at San Agustin, but the cost of further training at a private college, where she passed a competitive examination, proved to be too expensive for the family. Interns then

had to stay in the hospital and spend for their requirements: ‘a dozen panty, a dozen chemise, bras, several pairs of shoes, stockings, your beddings... we didn’t have money to buy those,’ Tita Mila told me one rainy December afternoon. And so, she abandoned her dream to become a nurse. Instead, she took up dressmaking lessons at a popular fashion school in Iloilo. Tita Mila considered this a practical choice given that, as young as fourteen years old, she was already sewing clothes for herself and their neighbours – she sold clothes and collected payments in instalments. An uncle in fact had wanted her to take up dressmaking right after high school, but Tita Mila was then keen on pursuing nursing.

After finishing her dressmaking lessons, Tita Mila was assigned by the school’s director to establish a branch in the town of San Jose in the nearby province of Antique – it would be the first fashion school in that province. She taught dressmaking to students and organised fashion shows from time to time; she also taught herself how to cut and curl hair, for she saw how her colleague who was assigned to teach ‘hair science’ made more money in a shorter time. Whenever she would go home for the weekend to Santa Rosa, she would borrow the school’s curlers and scissors and she would buy bottles of curling lotion. Tita Dolor was in fact the first person whose hair was cut by Tita Mila. As a hairdresser, Tita Mila proved to be popular in Santa Rosa. During the days leading to the annual *fiesta*, for example, Tita Mila would cut and curl women’s hair from morning until late at night, sometimes finishing at ten or eleven in the evening.

After four years in Antique, Tita Mila returned to Santa Rosa. She then took typing and secretarial lessons before attending night classes leading to a degree in commerce at San Agustin. In the morning, she would sew clothes—‘electric pleats’ were the rage then—and in the afternoon, she would help on the farm. She would leave for her classes at four in the afternoon and would not be back until 11 in the evening owing to the schedule of the jeep. Tita Remy was also studying then in San Agustin, and she and Tita Mila would go home at the same time. Owing to the brisk business in her dressmaking venture and the demands of farming, Tita Mila would sometimes be unable to attend her classes or complete assignments and other course requirements. Her classmates also teased her about how her arms were dark in one part and fair in another—the outcome of spending hours in the field.

In March 1965, Tita Mila graduated from San Agustin with a degree in commerce. Several months later, at the age of 28, she married her boyfriend of fourteen years. Her father opposed the marriage, and in fact, did not attend the wedding. His objection was due partly to the disparity between Tita Mila's and her husband's educational accomplishments, and standing, more generally. Whilst Tita Mila went to university, her husband did not even finish high school. His mother was a laundrywoman and his father was the personal driver of a scion of one of Iloilo's well-known elite families. Lolo Minong, as well as Tita Mila's uncles and aunts, wanted Tita Mila to end up with a man they considered more educated.

Another, but less articulated, objection to Tita Mila's marriage was that it effectively freed her from her responsibilities towards her family, particularly her siblings. As the Mahilway siblings were born, on the average, 2 to 3 years apart, this meant overlaps at school and university. Whilst expenses at school were more manageable, things changed when a sibling went to university. If there were more than one of them studying at the university level, which was often the case, expenses became considerable. As the eldest, Tita Mila was expected by her family to help her siblings with their education expenses.

Prior to Tita Mila's graduation and marriage, only Tita Dolor had finished her university degree, and with no interruption, owing to the low fees at the Iloilo Normal School. Tita Remy, the third of the siblings, stopped for a couple of years and focussed on helping in the family's livelihood, thus allowing her elder sisters Mila and Dolor to pursue their studies. It was only when Tita Mila was attending night classes for her commerce degree that Tita Remy went back to her studies. Their other siblings were still in elementary and high school at that time.

Instead of helping her younger brothers and sisters, Tita Mila had to focus on her own family. Tito Guillermo, with his limited education, ended up working for an inter-island shipping company as a messman, an assistant in a ship's kitchen and dining hall. His salary was not enough to sustain the family's expenses, especially when he and Tita Mila started to have children—they would have a total of six. To supplement her husband's salary, Tita Mila worked as she did prior to getting married. She sewed clothes and made shirts and caps that Tito Guillermo sold to passengers onboard the ships; she raised pigs, and later, ducks, the fertilised eggs of

which she sold to retailers in Iloilo. Tita Mila likewise attended to the fishing nets and coconut trees that her father gave her notwithstanding his earlier objection to the marriage. In a reversal of roles, when Tita Mila's eldest son was born, her youngest sister Tita Monica lived with them briefly to help take care of the baby. This was cut short when Tita Remy decided to bring Tita Monica with her to Bacolod, fearing that her youngest sibling's schooling would be jeopardised if she continued to stay with Tita Mila.

Although Tita Mila never explicitly discussed the objections to her marriage, she intimated that her marriage was, in fact, delayed. In her narrations, she emphasised how prolonged her courtship with Tito Guillermo was, and how persistent he was notwithstanding what for her was an unusually long courtship, as well as her departure for Antique. She likewise indicated that when, during the 14-year courtship, she and Tito Guillermo temporarily parted ways, she did not entertain other suitors because her parents wanted her to focus on her commerce degree. Marrying at the age of 28 was, for her, the attainment of much-deferred freedom from her parents. Notably, her age at marriage was several years more than the prevailing average age at marriage in the 1960s.²¹

Tita Mila's decision to get married despite her family's objections cast a long shadow on her relationship with her parents and her siblings—a shadow that I could only get glimpses of. I was told that Tita Mila felt oppressed and belittled by her natal family given her husband's standing. Such sentiments, her siblings claimed, she passed on and cultivated amongst her children, leading them to be slightly distant from the rest of the family.

On the part of Tita Mila's siblings, their elder sister's decision to marry led them to feel abandoned. Instead of helping them with their studies, Tita Mila chose herself. As I describe elsewhere in this thesis (see Chapters 1 & 4), this perception of selfishness coloured subsequent events in the lives of the Mahilways, including the subdivision of their land in Santa Rosa and the proposed sale of the farm in San

²¹ The 'singulate mean age at marriage' (i.e. the average length in years of single life of those who marry before age 50) in the Philippines in 1960 was 22.3; in 1970, this increased to 22.8 in 1970 (Concepcion & P.C. Smith 1977: 20). A similar figure for 1960, but specific to Western Visayas, was reported by P.C. Smith (1971: 164), although he did not distinguish between men and women.

Antonio. At times too, Tita Mila's siblings described their eldest sister's difficulties in life, including the fact that her second-born son, just like her, married early and did not help with his own siblings' education. It was Tita Mila's karma, they said.

The picture that arises here is of marriage as potentially endangering sibling ties, especially amongst the upwardly mobile. This is especially true where the marriage in question does not conform to ideals of hypergamy, an issue that I will return to in the next chapter. Indeed, elsewhere in the village, similar cases of older siblings marrying without helping finance the studies of at least one younger sibling elicited comments—usually in a hushed voice—that the older sibling in question is *daw daluk* (like a glutton). In some cases, and in contravention of their parents' wishes, elder siblings eloped with their spouses. At the same time, and to anticipate Chapter 4, even younger siblings were not exempt from expectations of assistance, and have had to delay their own marriages, thus compromising their attainment of full adulthood and autonomy.

Conclusion

The experiences and accounts of my interlocutors suggest that education, as an inheritance, exceeds the notion of 'investment.' Instead, the description of education as inheritance registered the history of education, and thus of colonialism and post-colonial state building, as well of class formation in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines. It was also underpinned by culturally and historically meaningful ideas of parenthood, childhood, siblingship, and personhood. Children owe their lives and opportunities in life to their parents, who, in turn, are completed by and derive status and prestige from their children's achievements in life. In pursuing education, children relied on their parents, whose authority children had to contend with.

At the same time, education as an inheritance meant that what was being transmitted was not passively received by children, but was something that they actively worked on to bring to completion. Thus, the post-war generation persisted, and they did so in the context of siblingship: they endured and persevered with their siblings, and at times for them. In cases where a person did not affirm the relational

underpinnings of educational striving, their ties with their siblings suffered in the long run, and even implicated their own children.

To the extent that education was spoken of as an inheritance, and was seen as the product of endurance, perseverance, and sacrifices, the people I worked with downplayed the importance of inequalities, both material (in the form of land) and social (in the form of connections), in allowing the pursuit of educational opportunities. Consequently, those who did not or were unable to obtain academic credentials were considered as lacking in the appropriate attitude and drive.

In making sense of education as inheritance, I have emphasised how far from being secular or non-religious, education in this instance was wrapped up in religious ideas that harked back to colonial and even pre-colonial times. Education was seen as an act of redemption, one that entailed redeeming selves and even souls. Precisely because education involved a person's core being, it was seen as lasting.



Figure 14. A retired school teacher

Chapter 3

A lineage of teachers:

profession, personal autonomy, and sibling hierarchies

Like many of their contemporaries, most of Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's daughters became public school teachers. Repeatedly, this fact appeared during my conversations with the family. Often, someone would mention that she or another sibling was a teacher, and before long, the names of the other teachers in the family would be mentioned, as if reciting a list. Tita Dolor, Tita Remy, Tita Angeles, and Tita Olive all pursued teaching careers, whilst the eldest and the youngest two trained in other fields. Several of their female paternal cousins also became teachers: Lucing and Naty, who were both already deceased by the time of my fieldwork, and Tita Edith, who was still alive when I first arrived in Santa Rosa. Hence, one of the ways in which the Mahilways described themselves—and were described by other long-timers in Santa Rosa—was as 'a lineage (*linyada*) of teachers.'

In this chapter, I attend to how quests for teaching careers were experienced and recalled by my interlocutors. I build on accounts that foreground how work is entwined with what people value, including notions of what it means to be a proper and good person with manifold relationships, and how such values and notions are aspired for, achieved, reproduced, and at times, become problematic or are problematised, in and through work (Day 2007*a*; 2007*b*; 2010; Harris 2007; Jiménez 2003).

For the people whom I worked with, the pursuit of teaching careers, and professions more generally, were shaped by desires for personal autonomy and achievements amidst parental restrictions and the limited professional opportunities that were available. Their accounts likewise emphasised how teaching in the 1960s and the 1970s was a profession that afforded some authority, respectability, and economic stability, with consequences that supposedly lasted beyond one's career, and were transformative of personhood. At the same time, their recollections hinted

at the more ambiguous entailments and outcomes of becoming a teacher, including comparatively low salaries, the importance of connections in gaining jobs, and the decline in the profession's prestige over time.

Threading through this chapter are the ways in which relationships and professions were described as lineages. Thus, professions, such as teaching, were vectors of connection amongst kin, and were not simply pursued in terms of individual goals. Descriptions of kinship ties and professions as lineages accentuated similarities, continuities, and progress whilst muting discontinuities, differences, and hierarchies. Moreover, such descriptions worked to distinguish families from one another in a context of wide-ranging kinship ties (see Chapter 1).

Significantly, although lineage in kinship is often discussed in terms of relations between ancestors and descendants, and indeed such was the case for the people whose lives are at the centre of this thesis, they also deployed the idea of lineage when describing relations amongst siblings, and by extension, cousins. The use of lineage in the context of siblingship, I argue, not only registers the historical transformations of Philippine kinship, especially those brought about by the Spanish colonisation. It also foregrounds how a kinship system described as flexible, cognatic, and siblingship-centred co-exists with lineal ways of reckoning kinship, and how these modes of kinship reckoning are contextual.

The affordances of teaching careers intersected with the age- and birth-order-based hierarchy of siblingship, in various ways. Professional success, at times, allowed such a hierarchy to be subverted in some ways, as when a younger sibling who became a teacher overtook an older sister whose professional fortunes were less favourable. Yet, not pursuing a teaching career was also a means for siblings, especially older ones, to craft sacrificing selves, in so far as it allowed their other, younger siblings to have better futures. In other cases, the pursuit of teaching careers led to the deepening of sibling hierarchy. Indeed, the path taken by older siblings and cousins appeared to have constrained what was possible for younger siblings and cousins, whilst it enabled the former's dominance over the latter.

Finally, the material that I discuss here suggests that the narration of biography was a means for asserting superiority over one's kin at a time when a person was dependent on them; it was also a means for invoking the prestige of a

profession that had become less desirable. Biography—in the form of unauthorised stories—figured too as a critique that highlighted the dangers posed by professional pursuits on persons and their relationships. Thus, achieving middle-classness, premised as it was on educational and professional striving, was not unequivocally or uniformly experienced and perceived positively.

Teaching's past

When the Mahilway siblings attended school and college from the late 1940s until the late 1970s, educational pursuits in the Philippines were intimately tied to aspirations to become a professional. Like many parents, Lolo Minong and Lola Ising wanted their children to become professionals, and becoming so was considered as the goal and reward for the sacrifices and perseverance that, as the previous chapter discussed, education entailed.

Sociologists working on the occupational hierarchy of the Philippines during this period (Castillo 1962; Tiryakian 1958; 1959) have described how professional occupations were seen as economically rewarding, both in terms of actual wages and salary and of job security; these occupations were endowed with prestige partly on the basis of specialised knowledge and training required, as well as an aura of significance relative to perceived national and local needs; and particularly relevant for peasant families, were appreciated for their comparatively lighter working conditions. To be a professional was to gain freedom from the land and manual labour. As I have indicated in the preceding chapters, manual labour was not particularly celebrated by elites and those with aspirations for upward mobility.

Amongst the professions that carried weight were the legal and medical fields. I have already discussed in the previous chapters how both professions were historically limited to the elites, particularly the men. Such an association continued well into the post-Second world war period, and to some extent, even during my fieldwork. Meanwhile, other professional fields were also considered prestigious, if slightly less so, and these fields included engineering, the professoriate, nursing, accountancy, and teaching. At the same time, occupations linked to traditional

sources of power, such as *hacienda* ownership and the priesthood, and those associated with the state, including political office, the army, and the police, were also accorded prestige.

For the Mahilways and their neighbours, the quest to becoming a professional was littered with obstacles, largely financial ones. These obstacles foreclosed the path to certain professions—as Tita Mila’s unrealised dream of becoming a nurse discussed in the previous chapter demonstrates—whilst making other paths easier to take. When I asked Tita Dolor why she and her other sisters chose to become teachers, she told me that it was the most accessible career available to them. ‘What matters is that we’re professionals,’ she said. As a scholar has noted, the introduction of mass education during the American colonial period set into motion a process where education was seen as a means for and symbol of upward mobility, and which gave rise to a situation where ‘*any* diploma was valued’ (Cariño 1973: 3, emphasis in the original).

Here, a contrast with medicine and law, two of the most prestigious professional occupations, is instructive. Unlike these two professions, which required four-year undergraduate degrees before an additional four-year professional training (and in the case of medicine, several more years of specialisation), to be a teacher entailed considerably shorter training. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, during the American colonial period, teaching programmes were offered in secondary schools or post-intermediate teacher training (‘normal’) schools. After 1925, a two-year post-secondary certificate was required of would-be teachers, and after 1949, education degrees became four-year programmes (Cortes 1980: 172; Savellano 1999). Moreover, unlike medicine, nursing, and other health-related subjects, education degrees did not involve expensive internships or placement.

As such, amongst the different professions, teachers’ training was the least expensive and had the shortest turnaround time—characteristics that in a context of limited resources and large sibling sets were quite attractive. For the Mahilways and the other people of Santa Rosa, and indeed, of the Philippines, teaching was the widest path and the shortest route to becoming professional. It is thus not surprising that in 1958, 32 per cent of all state-authorised undergraduate degree programmes were in education (Carson 1961: 124, cited in Cortes 1980: 170). Census data from 1903

indicate that in the province of Iloilo, almost 28 per cent of all individuals classified as professionals were teachers; by 1970, this proportion had risen to slightly more than 73 per cent (Blanc-Szanton 1982: 149).

I should stress, however, that until around the early 1970s, and especially in rural parts of the country and areas where residents had limited education, teaching did command respect and prestige. This was partly the result of the fact that earlier generations of Filipino teachers came from families of means. As I described in Chapter 2, this was true in the case of Iloilo. Likewise, and particularly in relation to rural areas, because teachers were educated in urban centres (including those who may have come from the rural areas), they came to represent urban ways of life, ‘modernity’ in general, and in some cases, the state (Dumont 1991; Landé 1965*b*: 338; Mojares 1991). There too was the fact that teachers were considered as substitutes for parents, and indeed, were expected to discipline their pupils, including by corporal means (Jocano 1969: 54).

The relative openness of the teaching profession converged with the post-1945 expansion of the public education system, which meant increased employment opportunities for teachers. Between 1948 and 1970, the number of elementary and secondary schools in the country more than tripled—and although this increase included private schools, most of the new schools were state-run (Cortes 1980: 155-56). The Philippines was certainly not unique in this regard, for a worldwide expansion of school systems, or what has been described as an ‘educational revolution,’ occurred between the 1950s and the 1970s (Meyer *et al.* 1977). Several explanations have been offered for the global growth of formal education (see *ibid*; Meyer *et al.* 1992; Ramirez & Meyer 1980), and it appears that post-colonial and post-war nation- and state-building amidst widespread recognition of and demand for education were key elements of this process. As Benedict Anderson (1988: 19) once described, the Philippine elites, ‘like other Third World oligarchies,’ after independence in 1946 ‘found that the simplest way of establishing its nationalist credentials was to expand cheap schooling.’

Despite the teaching profession’s relative openness and the post-war expansion of the education system, not everyone who desired to become a teacher could do so. Here the advantages conferred by access to land and political

connections became salient (see Chapter 2), as did state scholarship programmes. Thus, in the case of the Nuñezes, a neighbouring family who, as will be recalled from Chapter 1, tilled a much-smaller plot of land than the Mahilways, the oldest of the children (who were roughly in the same generation as the Mahilway siblings) was supposed to train as a teacher. However, because of the state-mandated transition to a four-year undergraduate degree from the previous two-year certificate programme, which dramatically increased the cost of training, that neighbour gave up her dream, and eventually ended up working as a saleslady at a Chinese-owned shop in the city. According to some of her younger siblings, and echoing with the idea of sacrificing siblings discussed in the preceding chapter, she did so to allow them to pursue their own ambitions.

Meanwhile, there were two other contemporaries of the Mahilway siblings who did become teachers, but whose families did not till expansive landholdings. One went to teaching college in her mid 20s, having left the convent a few years prior, and was supported by older siblings who were already working as merchant seamen. The other, Mrs Delgado, was the youngest in her sibling set. By the time she went to college, her older siblings had already married, thus she did not have to compete for limited resources. She likewise received a scholarship from the city government through the intercession of the husband of one of her sisters who was working for the city government during that period.

With four of the Mahilway siblings ending up as state school teachers, the family gained further prominence in Santa Rosa. They were considered exceptional and exemplary. Their fellow villagers saw the family as particularly earnest when it came to education, both as learners and dispensers—a reputation that drew its efficacy partly from the fact that Lolo Minong and Lola Ising had limited education. Some neighbours were in fact energised by this earnestness and sought to craft professional futures for their children. Notably, the Mahilways' exemplary and exceptional achievement was enabled in part by scholarship programmes, an issue that I will turn to below. For the most part, however, it was facilitated by the family's access to agricultural land, which ensured a regular income. Indeed, three of the four siblings who became teachers attended a private college.

Finally, as I have alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, the teaching profession in the immediate post-war decades was dominated by women, a situation that continued well into my fieldwork. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that normal courses were first offered in women's colleges during the late Spanish period, and some of the first dedicated normal schools were exclusively for women. During this time, too, women's colleges, as with higher education in general, were the preserve of the elite, a fact that presumably lent prestige to the teaching profession. In early twentieth century Iloilo, although 65 per cent of all teachers were men, and teachers composed almost 25 per cent of all male professionals, 31 per cent of all female professionals were teachers (Blanc-Szanton 1982: 149). The preponderance of male teachers during this time most likely reflected the fact discussed in Chapter 2 that several educational institutions in Iloilo were established and operated by educated men from the landed class. By 1970, almost 73 per cent of all teachers were women, and 85 per cent of all female professionals were teachers; in contrast, just nearly 54 per cent of all male professionals were teachers (*ibid*). In a context where men were seen as more likely and appropriately mobile (see Chapter 5), the teaching profession was thus a major route for women—those who could afford to go to teaching college—out of the family home and the village.

Knowledgeable and moral selves

As I have indicated, to be a teacher in the 1960s and the early 1970s was to ascend to a position of some power, influence, and respectability—limited to be sure compared to that accorded to lawyers, doctors, and nurses, but nonetheless significant for someone coming from a peasant background. Teachers, like other professionals, were often addressed using the appropriate title—in this case, as 'ma'am' or 'sir.'

In Santa Rosa, such an ascent was often described in terms of becoming knowledgeable, a description that cannot be understood apart from the history of limited literacy of villagers, and the increased importance of knowledge in legal and economic matters, as we have seen, for instance, in relation to properties. Moreover, as I discussed in the previous chapter, being knowledgeable was formative of social

adulthood, autonomy, and authority, and was indicative and even constitutive of profound transformations in personhood.

As purveyors of knowledge, teachers were deemed—or at the very least, expected to be—experts. This was signalled by, among other things, fluency in the English language, even during senility or moments of illness, hallucination, and near-death. That is, the knowledgeable personhood of teachers was expected to endure even during moments of crisis. Thus, during one of my first interviews with Lola Ising and her daughters, I asked where an affine, who also happened to be a teacher, worked. Tita Dolor mentioned the name of what turned out to be the wrong school, and this caused Tita Amy, who was also part of our conversation, to tease her older sister. Tita Amy jokingly said her sister must have been having an episode of senility. Addressing me and the others present, Tita Amy teasingly asked that we forgive Tita Dolor for having a senior citizen's moment.

'You know what'd really be difficult,' Tita Amy told us, 'is if she's already lost her mind and is sitting by the kerb, talking to herself.' She then went on to impersonate an imagined version of her older sister: 'Okay, children. Please sit down! Take out your notebooks and copy what's written on the board. Your next assignment is...' She did so using a high-pitched voice, as if a child herself.

Tita Amy then recounted an anecdote, one that I often heard throughout my fieldwork. One time in the late 1970s, their sister, Tita Angeles, exclaimed 'Oh my God! Have pity on my daughter!' in unbroken English, in the middle of the rice field, as members of the family made their way to the priest's house. Tita Angeles's daughter, Karen, had fallen ill and started having seizures after supposedly being bewitched by a neighbour known for being an *aswang* (a witch; viscera sucker).¹ Every time this anecdote was told, it drew laughter from those who recounted and heard it, since, notwithstanding the urgency of the situation, Tita Angeles had still spoken in English. Tita Dolor affirmed the perceived fluency of teachers in the English language. Resonating with the theme of language use during moments of illness and

¹ The *aswang* has been the subject of scholarly accounts, including those of Cannell (1999: chap. 7), Lieban (1967: 66-71), Pertierra (1983), Ramos (1968; 1969). I have also written about the topic in relation to my fieldwork. See Cruz (2014). See also Chapter 7.

other crises that Tita Amy raised, Tita Dolor said that even when hospitalised, teachers tend to speak in English, especially when talking to nurses and doctors.

From the establishment of mass education during the American colonial period until the late 1930s, the English language was the only medium of instruction in elementary and secondary schools, after which, the state education bureaucracy experimented with using Filipino and other Philippine languages alongside English, although the latter continued to be the dominant language. In 1974, the state shifted to a bilingual policy, with Filipino as the other medium of instruction (see Bernardo 2004). Just before my fieldwork, there had been a shift to mother-tongue based teaching for the early grades, with Filipino and English only used at the higher grades. However, most of the teaching in higher education continued to be in English. English was also considered as an official language by the state. Most laws, policies, and bureaucratic communications continued to be in English, and legal and legislative proceedings would usually be conducted in this language.

Meanwhile, broadsheets that catered to the middle and upper classes were all published in English; until the mid-1980s, news and public affairs shows on television were all broadcast in English, and until the mid-1990s, most newscasts and other journalism shows deemed or claiming to be ‘serious’ used the language (Dayag 2004). In contrast, movies and television shows geared for the masses were in Filipino. Filipino, which in this context already occupied a subordinate position, is largely based on Tagalog, which though one of more than 150 languages in the Philippines, is the language used in the national capital and surrounding provinces. Languages considered ‘regional’ or ‘provincial’ are deemed unsophisticated, and particularly pertinent for the Visayan languages (e.g. Hiligaynon, Cebuano, Waray, and Kinaraya), are stereotypically associated (for instance in movies and television shows produced out of Manila) with blue collar workers, most especially maids, but also drivers, security guards, and mall workers.

With this history in mind, portraying teachers as fluent and even incorrigible speakers of English meant claiming for teachers not only a status as knowledgeable persons, but also as individuals with at least a modicum of sophistication and modernity. It is also a quiet claim of difference from stereotypes of Visayans. Moreover, given that Tita Amy’s and Tita Dolor’s portrayals of teachers concern

moments of illness and crisis, their portrayals appear to suggest that teachers' affinity with the English language is deep-seated, even unchanging. Teachers may face difficult situations or may become ill and even lose their grip on reality, yet their mastery of the English language—their being knowledgeable—persists.

The portrayals of teachers as *naga-ininglis* (English-language speakers) that I heard were silent, however, on the kind of English language used by teachers. As is the case with most English-language speakers in the Philippines, Filipino teachers, including those I met in Santa Rosa, tend to speak a formal and formulaic variety (e.g. referring to themselves as 'yours truly'; resorting to legalese even in conversations). Linguists have explained this tendency as resulting from the way English-language classes have historically emphasised grammar over conversational and creative uses (A. Gonzalez 2004).

When my interlocutors spoke in Filipino, the tendency to talk in a formal and formulaic manner was likewise present. Owing to my being identified as someone who studied and worked in Manila, my conversations with Tita Dolor, Tita Remy, and other teachers in Santa Rosa were often in Filipino. Although I would always tell them that I could understand basic Hiligaynon, they continued conversing in Filipino—the formal, learned, and 'deep' version that is used in schools and universities, indexed by, for instance, the use of the word *sapagkat* instead of *dahil* or *kasi* to mean 'because.'

This variety of the Filipino language was often peppered with English words, phrases, and sentences—a more formal version of Taglish (Tagalog-English code switching). It was also often the case that formal Filipino expressions were mixed with Hiligaynon words, sometimes with both Hiligaynon and English.² As has been noted, code-switching in the Philippines is a practice that is closely associated with the urban

² As an example, here is a snippet from one of my conversations with a retired teacher in Santa Rosa, along with my translation:

'*Hindi marunong magsulat, ni ng kanyang pangalan* [formal Filipino]. Grade three! Last section *ko mo* [Hiligaynon], section 13. *Te* [Hiligaynon], *sa ibang* [Filipino] school *na siya nanggaling* [Filipino]. *Inaaway* [Filipino] *ya* [Hiligaynon] *mga guro* [Filipino]. *Kwan gid ya, tunto gid ya ka tama ya* [Hiligaynon].'

(He didn't know how to write, not even his name. And he's in grade three! I was handling the last section, you see, section 13. Now, he came from another school. He'd always fight his teachers. Um, really, he was such a fool.)

and educated middle classes, and conveys linguistic dexterity and efficiency, and depending on the context, may mark relative informality, distance, or intimacy (M.L.S. Bautista 2004). As such, it is consistent with the image of teachers as epitomes of modernity that I discussed above.

Teachers, however, were not just considered as exemplars of modernity, but also its midwives. Here, to be a teacher had moral implications, as may be gleaned from the fact that teachers of the Mahilway sibling-teachers' generation were known to be particularly stern. Pupils, I was told, respected and even feared their teachers, especially the physical forms of punishment—such as pinching or hitting with a stick—that they could and did inflict. Parents then deferred to teachers, even encouraging the latter to corporally punish their children notwithstanding the Philippine education bureaucracy's official prohibition of the practice.

There was palpable pride amongst teachers in being strict—one that stemmed largely from the conviction that instilling discipline is key to shaping their pupils' future. They took to heart the idea that teachers have, particularly amidst a history of limited education, the responsibility for radically changing for the better the life trajectories of their pupils; in many cases opening paths previously not accessible to their pupils' parents.

A common type of story that I heard amongst my teacher-interlocutors in Santa Rosa was how their strictness in the classroom eventually paid off, with their former pupils going on to become successful individuals—that is, finishing university and becoming professionals. Equally emphasised was the gratitude expressed by their former pupils years or even decades after leaving school. Such expressions of gratitude often occurred in random places and unexpected encounters.

Thus, Mrs Delgado, who was already retired when first I met her, and who used to teach at the village school, remarked that her daughter disliked accompanying her around Santa Rosa or to her various engagements. They would often come across some of her former pupils, who would then greet and chat with them. This usually meant that Mrs Delgado and her daughter, to the latter's annoyance, would be delayed, or worse, late for their appointment. For someone given by colleagues and pupils the nickname of 'Armida' (after Armida Siguion-Reyna, a popular opera singer and actress known for portraying villain roles) because

of her strictness, such everyday acts constituted recognition and affirmation of the righteousness of her comportment in the classroom. ‘So, I told her,’ Mrs Delgado said, “‘that’s how popular your mother is, that even if I was strict, they value me. They now know that my strictness was for their own good.’”

The strictness of teachers not only pertained to the use of physical punishment; it also meant utmost attention to the performance of their pupils. A common emphasis of the teachers I conversed with in Santa Rosa was how they devoted time and effort to making sure their pupils understood their lessons. In this vein, they emphasised the use of various techniques, including never sitting down whilst teaching, flashing multiplication cards fast, and devoting time to each pupil. The goal of ensuring that pupils grasped their lessons sometimes meant that teachers, as well as students, spent more time in the classroom than was officially required of them.

Given the comparatively low salary of public school teachers, to which I shall return below, this aspect of their careers was often described in ways that evoked ‘sacrifice’ on the part of teachers. In this manner, the figure of the teacher as one who paves the way for a better future for her pupils, and who sacrifices in terms of energy and time, resonated with the way in which the pursuit of upward mobility was described partly in terms of sacrifices on the part of parents and older siblings (see Chapter 2).

Teachers’ strictness also allowed them to distinguish themselves professionally and morally from their fellow pedagogues. Such a distinction was often made in the context of discussions about teaching practices. As we have seen, my interlocutors depicted themselves as enthusiastic teachers who were thoroughly dedicated to their pupils. Meanwhile, they portrayed some of their colleagues as less so, thus doubling the workload of the truly virtuous teachers.

Professional-cum-moral distinctions applied not only to colleagues, but also to fellow teachers who hailed from Santa Rosa, including those who may be related through ties of kinship and friendship. The Mahilways thus differentiated themselves from their neighbour Emma, who during my time in the field was already retired, having taught for years at the village school in Santa Rosa. Although, as a neighbour, Emma was close to the Mahilways—she always joined Lola Ising in various prayer

vigils when the latter was still alive, and during the latter's death, she was part of the group that went to the Mahilways' house to recite the nightly prayers for the dead—the siblings dismissed her as an inferior teacher. Emma, the siblings told me, was not dedicated to her profession. Instead of being strict and paying attention to her pupils, Emma would often ask them to do deskwork so she could go home and play *mah-jong*. Such a predilection for gambling continued after Emma's retirement, and indeed, she was described as gambling away her retirement benefits. Notably, as I have described in earlier chapters, gambling was closely associated in Santa Rosa with the lower classes.

Finally, this distinction at times served to diminish the achievements of fellow teachers from Santa Rosa. This was true in the case of Mrs Delgado, who I later learnt, was related to the Mahilway siblings since their Papá Enso (to recall, their uncle—FFZDH) was her spiritual godfather. Notwithstanding this relationship, the siblings described Mrs Delgado as a less-than-upright teacher, for, they claimed, she used her position in the village school to ensure that her niece would end up as class valedictorian. Such a depiction was shaped by the fact that the youngest of the Mahilway siblings, Tita Monica, was also in contention for valedictorian. I suspect too that it also mattered that Mrs Delgado came from a family of farmworkers, the status of which when Santa Rosa was an agrarian village was lesser than those of the Mahilways. Despite this difference, Mrs Delgado became a teacher, and unlike the Mahilway teacher-siblings, even went on to become a school principal.

Inaugurating a line

Thus far, I have described the historical factors that underpinned the attractiveness of the teaching profession especially after the Second World War until the 1970s. I have also indicated that notwithstanding the teaching profession's relative openness, not everyone who wished to become a teacher could do so due to prevailing economic and political inequalities. I have likewise discussed how becoming a teacher was entwined with transformations in personhood, that is, the formation of

knowledgeable selves. In this section, I describe the implications for kinship ties, especially siblingship, of the pursuit of teaching careers.

Of all the Mahilway siblings who became state school teachers, it was Tita Dolor who I spent the most time with. This was because unlike her teacher-sisters, she resided in the family's main house in Santa Rosa. Both Tita Remy and Tita Angeles lived on Negros Island, the former in Bacolod and the latter in Bago. Tita Olive had a house elsewhere in Molo, but for the most part of my fieldwork, she was in the United States with her husband. As I came to learn during the latter part of my fieldwork, she was also embroiled in a long-standing dispute with some of her sisters (see Chapter 4).

Tita Dolor was extremely keen to talk about her days at teaching college and her subsequent career in Bacolod, then Bataan, and later, New York. When I first went to their house, with the objective of setting an appointment for a date when I could sit with Lola Ising for an interview, Tita Dolor narrated bits of her career trajectory without much prodding. This was something that happened repeatedly throughout my fieldwork. Whilst waiting for the visiting hours at the hospital's intensive care unit, even during the wake for Lola Ising or the preparations for the feast of San José, Tita Dolor often talked about her days as a teacher. One Sunday afternoon, Tita Dolor was so engrossed with the stories she was narrating—most of which were retellings—that she lost track of the time. Had I not reminded her, she would have missed the mass.

These episodes raise the question: what was so absorbing and compelling about the stories that Tita Dolor thoroughly enjoyed sharing? Part of the answer, I suggest, lies in how these stories allowed her to convey her personal achievements, and in doing so, to assert her precedence over her siblings. It was also perhaps the case that the stories formed a connection between the two of us—prior to embarking on the PhD, I taught in a university in Manila. Moreover, at least as far as I could tell, my visits were welcome disruptions to an everyday routine that was often limited to the family compound. Having retired, Tita Dolor usually stayed at home, and had few visitors, often just their paternal cousin Tita Betty.

The first of the siblings to go to teaching college, Tita Dolor originally wanted to study medicine, but settled for an education degree because of the family's limited

means. She only mentioned this foreclosed dream once—and in passing—a few days before I left the field. What she emphasised instead throughout many of our conversations was having graduated from the Iloilo Normal School. To recall from the previous chapter, the School was a state-run teacher training institution in Iloilo City that traced its roots to the American colonial period. In the 1950s, after the Philippine state converted teacher training to four-year undergraduate degrees from the previous two-year certificate programmes, the School started to offer bachelor's degrees in elementary and secondary education. It was officially converted to a college in 1965, and in 1986, it became the West Visayas State University.³

Tita Dolor took pains to underline how difficult it was to be admitted to the School. Places were limited, and applicants had to pass both a screening examination and an interview. Moreover, once admitted, students had to struggle with the heavy demands of the curriculum and the grade requirement for retention. This was a struggle that Tita Dolor described in terms of time. Whilst her younger teacher-siblings, who all attended the privately-run San Agustin, enjoyed their inter-semester breaks, she and her fellow Normalians did not, as they had to work on their projects and other requirements. Final examinations for the first semester were often held on the day just before the start of the second semester.

The heavy academic load, however, was construed by Tita Dolor as consistent with the School's reputation as a top-tier institution. She often underscored how her alma mater was a perennial top performer in the examinations for teachers ever since these were instituted in 1978; at one point, she claimed, graduates of the School were exempted from taking the examinations due to the School's track record.

Although the academic load was heavy, an admission to the School was much coveted, not the least due to economic reasons. As a state-run institution, the fees at the School were subsidised. Tita Dolor paid only 15 pesos (approx. ₱2.7 in 1960) per semester; her siblings who went to San Agustin had to pay 200 to 500 pesos per semester (approx. ₱36 to ₱90 in 1960).

³ <http://wvsu.edu.ph/index.php/about/history>, accessed 11 January 2017.

The subsidised fees allowed Tita Dolor to pursue her undergraduate degree in elementary education continuously, and in 1960, she became the first of the siblings to graduate and become a professional, thus overtaking their eldest, Tita Mila, who, as discussed in the previous chapter, took a slightly circuitous route that eventuated in marriage. Tita Remy, who was immediately younger to Tita Dolor, had to stop her studies for a few years due to financial difficulties.

Although muted, still present in Tita Dolor's descriptions of the rigour and reputation of the School was a portrayal of herself as more intelligent than her siblings who attended a private university. Aside from her, only Tita Monica managed to study at the School, although by Tita Monica's time, it had already been converted into a university—and indeed, Tita Monica took up nursing rather than teaching (see next chapter). To anticipate a later section, it was also through the language of intellectual superiority that some of Tita Dolor's younger siblings described their frayed ties with their older sister.

Slightly more audible was Tita Dolor's recognition of the fact that whilst being a Normalian may have conferred prestige, it did not necessarily translate into financial advantage, for the salary of public school teachers was the same regardless of where a teacher completed their degree. 'Good thing if our salaries were higher than theirs, but it was just the same. Well, you really can't do anything about it,' she explained one time before reverting to her narrative of how challenging it was to study at the School.

Tita Dolor's accounts often accentuated how her foray into the Normal School paved the way for her younger siblings to follow her path as an educator. 'They also became teachers' and 'they followed me' were usual expressions that she used in describing how she and three of her sisters all pursued the same profession. Moreover, and as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, she also described how she and her sisters formed a *linyada* of teachers. Although, at times, she emphasised how their *linyada* included their paternal cousins Lucing, Tita Naty, and Tita Edith, more frequently, she did not. Thus, for the most part, by describing themselves as a *linyada*, Tita Dolor also presented herself as the originator of the lineage.

I should note here that the Mahilways were not alone in describing themselves or being described as a *linyada*. Some families in the village, for instance, were described as *linyadas* of merchant seamen, having two or three generations of men working on board merchant ships (see Chapter 5). One family that I knew was identified as a *linyada* of healers (*manogbulong*). Notably, *linyada* was used interchangeably by my interlocutors with *pamilya*, the Spanish-derived and contemporary Filipino term for ‘family,’ although in this context, it referred not to the nuclear family, but to a wider kin group related through ties of filiation and marriage, and with a shared characteristic, such as a common occupation. It thus bears similarity with the *família* of urban Portugal, which Pina-Cabral (1997: 78) has described as a ‘polythetic category’ referring to ‘an open-ended group of people who feel that they are associated with each other’ based on joint participation in social reproduction.

The significance of *linyada* could perhaps be appreciated when seen in the light of descriptions of cognatic kinship in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in Austronesia that, to varying degrees, presuppose an opposition between the flexibility of cognatic kinship in the region and ideas of lineage and descent often emanating from Africanist anthropology. I have already mentioned this opposition in the Introduction, but to cite an example, here I invoke O.W. Wolters (1999 [1982]: 21) whose oft-cited monograph describes cognatic kinship, ‘an indifference toward lineage descent,’ and a corresponding present-mindedness as ‘three widely represented cultural features in many parts of early Southeast Asia.’

Yet, as Astuti (2000) has demonstrated in the case of the Vezo of Madagascar, the flexibility of cognatic kinship may very well co-exist with notions of unilineal descent, and the question on what aspect of kinship is foregrounded partly depends on a person’s generational location, age, and stage in the life course. Moreover, notwithstanding the cultural emphasis on the processuality of personhood and kinship, the Vezo do have ideas of what is given and biologically inherited (Astuti 1998; 2009). In a parallel and obverse move for China, Stafford (2000) has shown how the flexibility of relations often imputed to cognatic societies also prevails in a society often described as having patrilineal kinship.

Given *linyada*'s etymological root (it may be traced to the Spanish *línea*), it is tempting to argue that the idea of lineage is the result of the Hispanic conquest. After all, as I discussed in Chapter 1, it was during the three and half centuries of Spanish rule that surnames and legal and ecclesiastical regulations pertaining to marriage and inheritance were introduced. Whilst I do not wish to underestimate the impact of colonisation on prevailing kinship norms and practices, I also do not want to impute undue causal weight on the arrival of the Iberian conquerors.

As Cannell (1999: chap. 2) has argued in the context of marriage, even prior to the arrival of the Spanish, there were already incipient attempts on the part of the elite to fix hierarchy by regulating access to women from their families. Such attempts are suggestive of the significance of ideas of origin, descent, and lineage, at least for the elites in whose interest it was to restrict hypergamy amongst their subjects. Moreover, it appears that notwithstanding the relative fluidity of the precolonial social structure, such that it was possible for lower-ranked persons to become chiefs through achievement, distinctions were made between chiefs who came from 'an ancient descent line' and those 'of a less exalted lineage' (i.e. one founded by a formerly low-ranking ancestor who rose through the ranks through the accumulation of wealth and acts of ferocity)' (Junker 1999: 141). Likewise, in Panay, at least in the context of healing and shamanism, such as those of the *ma-aram* mentioned in the previous chapter, there is evidence of 'some emphasis on lineal ancestry and inherited status' (Cannell 1999: 125; see also Magos 1992: 59-61; Ponteras 1980: 274-75).⁴

What I take from these accounts is the need to be attentive to the ways in which notions of lineage may be elaborated, minimised, or even denied by ordinary

⁴ Anthropologists working in another tradition have also cast light on the significance in Southeast Asia and Austronesia of ideologies of origins, ancestry, and precedence, including how links to an origin give rise to precedence in social relations. Fox (2006c [1995]) makes a distinction between what he calls as 'lateral expansion' and 'apical demotion.' In the former, usually where land and other resources are readily available, groups of roughly similar status leave and establish new settlements, which then become the reference point for determining origins and precedence. In the latter, often in hierarchical societies with clear delineation between rulers and ruled, a single line is privileged, and in that line, in each generation, usually just an individual. The rest have lesser status. In such societies, reconnecting to the privileged line through marriage is commonplace, as is the forced expulsion of high-ranking individuals and their followers who then establish a new lineage elsewhere. Notably, Bellwood (2006 [1996]) has speculated that the regional emphasis on origins may have been partly responsible for the rapid expansion of the Austronesian world.

people. That is, whilst lineage may be an analytical abstraction of anthropologists (Kuper 1982), it could very well be part of the discourse of anthropologists' interlocutors, in which case, what is critical is to examine what it enables but also disables.

Thus, to go back to Santa Rosa, descriptions of the Mahilways as a *linyada* of teachers were tied to ascriptions or claims of prestige; such descriptions evoked an image of the family as an unbroken line of successful teachers—and in this way, was silent on the trajectories of the oldest and the two youngest siblings (see Chapters 2, 4, & 6), as well as foreclosed ambitions, such as Tita Dolor's initial desire to become a doctor. Such descriptions, especially whenever the siblings' paternal cousins were excluded, also enabled Tita Dolor to present herself as high-achieving and precedent-setting, and even superior to her siblings, both older and younger. Since she was both the second oldest of the siblings and the first to become a teacher, the discourse of *linyada* both affirmed the age- and birth-order-based hierarchy of siblingship (i.e. Tita Dolor in relation to her younger teacher-siblings) and supplanted it (i.e. Tita Dolor in relation to their oldest sibling). Meanwhile, whenever their paternal cousins were acknowledged as forming part of the *linyada*, what was elided was the striking absence of their maternal cousins (see below). As I have indicated in the previous chapters, Lola Ising's side of the family had lesser resources than Lolo Minong's.

It is also perhaps not unrelated that elite families in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines have a history of constructing elaborate genealogies. For example, The Lopezes, a *mestizo* family of Jaro and later, Manila, have published a multi-volume family history and genealogy (see McCoy 2009 [1993]). During my fieldwork, I came across the 931-page genealogy of the Ledesmas of Jaro. The owners of a leading maritime university have also published a similar tome. Thus, by describing themselves as constituting a *linyada*, Tita Dolor could have been invoking the aura of prestige attached to elite families.

Tellingly, there were differences in the way that Tita Dolor and her other teacher-siblings spoke of themselves as a *linyada*. Unlike the former, who talked of going to teachers' college as an individual achievement and as setting the stage for the latter, the latter often spoke in terms of following a path that had been established for them. My conversations with Tita Remy were exemplary in this regard.

One time, whilst we were eating mid-afternoon snacks, I asked Tita Remy how she ended up as a teacher. It was in January, a month after Lola Ising's death. Tita Remy had come home to Santa Rosa from Bacolod to help with the preparations for the culmination of the nightly prayers for the dead. As was the tradition in Santa Rosa, three sets of 9-day novenas (*decenario*) were recited for Lola Ising, and the end of the third set was to be marked with a small gathering of kin, neighbours, and the elderly women who recited the novena.⁵ 'I went to San Agustin,' was her initial answer. I asked her to elaborate. 'Your Tita Dolor was already studying to become a teacher. Well, I wanted to take up agriculture, but they wouldn't let me. They said it's a course for men.' She laughed, then she continued: 'Later, I said "I'll just study music," but they still wouldn't allow me. "Just be a teacher," my father and my mother said. "Be a teacher, just like your older sister." So, teaching it was.' Here, Tita Dolor's earlier and precedent-setting foray to teaching college appears to have intertwined with strong parental control and economic reasons in defining what was possible for her younger siblings. A career as a teacher became the given option for her sisters.

As Tita Remy's recollection indicates, wrapped up too in the givenness of a teaching career were ideas about gender. As I have already discussed, women dominated the teaching profession in the Philippines. In Santa Rosa, I heard people link the teaching profession to norms of femininity. Teachers were thought of as spending most of their time between school and home, with almost no time to socialise with friends or to go to malls and other public places. They thus conformed to an ideal of women that made a virtue out of circumscribed mobility. Teachers were at times even preferred as wives by men who were away for extended periods of time, including merchant seafarers and soldiers—teachers were imagined as having limited opportunities for extramarital affairs.

Moreover, because education degrees and teaching careers were appraised as requiring serious and diligent study, they were considered as particularly appropriate

⁵ I was told that if the deceased is an elderly, then three sets of *decenario* were required, otherwise a single set would suffice. The counting of the three 9-day sets started on the night of the third day after the burial of Lola Ising, when the family went to the beach to wash away the presence of death (see Chapter 4).

for women. Men, as I discuss in Chapter 5, whilst not thought of as unintelligent, were not expected to be as or more diligent in their studies than their sisters for they were more mobile during their childhood and teenage years, and were thought of as more likely to spend more time with their friends.

The factors that underpinned the givenness of a teaching career—gendered ideals, parental authority, and economic considerations—receded from view, however, when the Mahilways spoke of themselves as a lineage of teachers, or in Tita Remy’s case, as a family of teachers. It appears to me that to invoke the family in this sense was to render becoming a teacher inevitable, a simple matter of following what had been done before, and of accumulating further success.

When asked, Tita Remy denied regretting or being forced to take an education degree. Aside from getting used to the profession over time, she also invoked the economic attractiveness of a teaching career, which derived from its stability. A teacher employed by the government was practically assured of a life-long career in the public school system. Unlike other occupations that were sensitive to economic fluctuations or to electoral cycles (in the case of government employees), state school teachers were guaranteed of permanency, and every year there was a shortage of teachers—albeit budget constraints usually limited the number of new teachers that could be hired. For those coming from a context where income was dependent on the land, the river, or the sea, and the vagaries of the weather, the modest—and regular—salary of teachers had its charms.

The economic attractiveness of being a teacher extended well into the future, as Tita Remy explained. ‘A teaching career’s stable. When you get old, you’ll have a pension, just like me. I actually received a lump sum when I retired. It was worth five years of pension. Then I waited for five years before getting my first pension cheque. I used the lump sum to buy the passenger jeepney, the one that your uncle [her husband] is driving.’

Most of the Mahilway sibling-teachers remained in the teaching profession until their retirement. During my fieldwork, Tita Dolor and Tita Remy had both already retired, whilst Tita Angeles was set to do so the following year. Only Tita Olive had left the profession. She succeeded her cousin Lucing (who had earlier also left her teaching job) in the latter’s relatively more lucrative post in the Iloilo branch

of one of the Philippines' big telecommunications companies, which, at that time, was a monopoly (see L.C. Salazar 2007). The difference in salary was too significant to ignore. A fortnight's salary in Tita Olive's new job was equivalent to two months' in her old teaching post. When Tita Olive retired from the telecommunications company, she received almost two million pesos (approx. ₱28,600); when Tita Remy retired, her lump sum amounted to just six hundred thousand pesos (approx. ₱8,600).

Nevertheless, amidst this stark difference in salary and retirement benefits, Tita Remy only indirectly articulated her dissatisfaction. Aside from factually stating the amounts that she and her sister received upon retirement, Tita Remy simply sighed—then laughed.

Desiring autonomy

The recollections that I elicited and heard foregrounded achieving selves, and in the case of Tita Dolor, also a precedent-setting self. These recollections likewise minimised disappointments and foiled ambitions, regrets, and the coercive forces that made a teaching career a given. In this section, I consider how the pursuit of teaching careers was entwined with geographical mobility and aspirations for personal autonomy, although as I shall elaborate, such aspirations were not necessarily realised.

Nowhere was geographical mobility more prominent than in Tita Dolor's biography. When she graduated from the Iloilo Normal School, her parents encouraged her to apply for a teaching position in Iloilo City. Given her Papá Enso's political connections (see Chapter 1), it would not have been improbable for her to get a position in one of the city's public schools. Yet, she opted to send applications to public schools elsewhere in the Western Visayas and other nearby provinces. Laughing intermittently, and referring to the strict parental control described in the previous chapter that she and her siblings experienced, she told me: 'I graduated in 1960. But I didn't apply here in Iloilo. I didn't want to. I wanted to be independent. Here, you're overprotected.'

It was in Negros Island where Tita Dolor eventually found a job. Along with her fellow Normalians, Tita Dolor filed her application with the office in charge of the rural schools outside of the main city, Bacolod. Through the intercession of a cousin's classmate, who she encountered in the office, she secured the endorsement of a district supervisor for a possible job in a *barrio* school on the northern tip of the island. Tita Dolor, being unfamiliar with the island's geography, was unaware of the remoteness of the school where she was being recommended.

Whilst waiting for a decision on her application, Tita Dolor also sent applications to other places, including Bacolod City. She immediately received a response from the superintendent of the city schools, who was keen on hiring graduates of the Iloilo Normal School. Tita Dolor underwent a selection interview, and was subsequently offered a post teaching Grade three pupils. Much to the displeasure of the superintendent of the country schools, who was expecting her to join their division, and to the envy of other Normalians who had already accepted appointments in country schools, Tita Dolor accepted the city division's offer.

A sense of adventure and satisfaction pervaded Tita Dolor's recounting of her quest for a job in Bacolod. It was, to begin with, her first time away for an extended period from the family home in Santa Rosa. She went to Negros without knowing anyone who could help her land a job; meeting her cousin's classmate, she said, was a fortuitous event. Moreover, landing a teaching job in the city and thus avoiding an assignment in a far-flung village was not just an affirmation of the worth of her degree (and a fruit of her labours at teachers' college), but was also a triumph over her fellow graduates.

More importantly, however, it was a matter of short-circuiting a bureaucracy that placed a premium on connections. In the immediate post-war decades, hiring decisions were prone to pressure from politicians and education bureaucrats keen on dispensing patronage to their supporters and constituents. To get a position and a favourable assignment—in an urban centre, for example—an applicant had to have access to a patron, either directly or through an intermediary. Those without such connections often had to accept an assignment even if the school was in a distant area, with the intention of eventually applying for a transfer to a more desirable school or district. The importance of connections was particularly pronounced

amidst the popularity of teaching programmes on the one hand, and budgetary constraints on the number of new teachers that could be hired in a given year, on the other.

Two of Tita Dolor's sisters—Tita Remy and Tita Angeles—and their cousin Tita Edith followed her to Negros. Yet, because they neither had the connections nor the educational pedigree, their assignments were outside Bacolod. Tita Angeles established a career in a much smaller city to the south of Bacolod. Tita Remy initially had to teach in a school in an upland and rural village in another town. During this assignment, she related how she had to cross rivers and walk for hours across a forested area infested with snakes to reach the school, and had to learn martial arts and how to use a gun. Tita Edith, meanwhile, was assigned to a school in another town at the heart of Negros's then-burgeoning sugar industry. After several years in their initial assignments, with Tita Dolor acting as their intermediary, Tita Remy and Tita Edith successfully requested to be transferred to Bacolod City.

As Tita Dolor's explanation for her decision not to apply for a teaching job in Iloilo makes clear, the sojourn of the Mahilway teacher-siblings on Negros was also about the pursuit of autonomy. Teaching jobs in Bacolod and elsewhere in Negros provided the Mahilway sisters some distance from their parents and other elderly kin. Autonomy, however, was not automatically gained the moment they crossed the strait, and neither did it lack emotional complexity.

The day before her first day at work in Bacolod, Tita Dolor sailed from Iloilo. Her father, Lolo Minong, accompanied her and stayed for the night in her new boarding-house. The following day, Lolo Minong walked Tita Dolor and her landlady-colleague to their workplace. Upon arriving at the school, the landlady teased Tita Dolor and called out to their principal. 'Sir! Sir! This is Dolor's father! She's like a grade school pupil, *no?*,' Tita Dolor recalled her colleague telling the principal. Lolo Minong, I was told, then laughed, and explained to the principal that Tita Dolor had been crying for she had been anxious about starting her new job and being away from Santa Rosa. 'It was as if I wanted to go back with my father, back here to Santa Rosa,' Tita Dolor explained.

When she was just starting her job, Tita Dolor would go home to Santa Rosa every weekend, with her dirty laundry packed in her bag. By each Sunday evening,

when she would have to return to Bacolod, her clothes would be clean, having been washed and ironed by Lola Ising. Over time, however, her trips to Santa Rosa became less and less frequent: from weekly, they became fortnightly; from fortnightly they became monthly. Later, she would go home once every six months, even more. ‘It’s like I already got used to it,’ she said.

Let me note here briefly that, although Tita Dolor emphasised in her narratives the pursuit of personal autonomy, she was silent about the autonomy of her younger teacher-siblings. I have mentioned that two of her sisters and a cousin followed her to Negros. For Tita Remy, in particular, joining their older sister meant not being autonomous. As it turned out, when Tita Remy was reassigned to Bacolod due to her older sister’s mediation, she decided to reside in the same boarding-house where the latter had been staying. This arrangement made Tita Remy vulnerable to Tita Dolor’s rather domineering attitude. One fragment of a story that I heard amongst the Mahilways—but neither from Tita Dolor nor Tita Remy—was how the former would scold the latter for not buying clothes and other personal items for herself. How could Tita Remy afford to do so, their siblings pointed out, when Tita Dolor barely contributed to groceries and other expenses in the boarding house? Yet, Tita Dolor called Tita Remy *gaga*, a pejorative term referring to a woman lacking in intelligence—a slur to be sure given that the woman in question is a fellow teacher, supposedly a fount of knowledge.

In speaking of teaching as a route towards autonomy, Tita Dolor sometimes invoked being able to refuse the wishes of older kin. I got this sense whilst listening to her narrate the story of their maternal grandmother’s deathbed wish. At that point, she and her teacher-sisters were already established in Negros. Their grandmother called for her and Tita Angeles, although the latter, because of teaching duties, was unable to make it. A *manughilót* (one who heals through massage; also, a bone-setter), their grandmother wanted to bequeath the bottles of medicinal oil and other liniment that she used to heal afflictions. Because Tita Angeles was not around, their grandmother wanted to give them to Tita Dolor, who flatly refused. ‘I don’t want to become a *manughilót*. I’m already a professional,’ Tita Dolor recalled telling her grandmother.

The *manughilót*, along with other local healers such as the *manugluy-a* (one who heals by applying ginger) and the *babaylan* (shaman) are often thought of in opposition to the medical doctor. This opposition is partly informed by class and geography: poor Filipinos, especially those in rural areas, have very limited access to medical care, and so often must rely on local healers. In addition, the opposition is rendered in temporal terms that are simultaneously about knowledge, with the doctor representing scientific knowledge and the modern, and local healers standing for superstition and the pre-modern past.

Tita Dolor's refusal of her dying grandmother's wish may thus be seen as an assertion of a professional's (in this case, a teacher's) radical difference and superiority from the poor, the rural folk, and the superstitious. It also instantiated a break in intergenerational relations within the family. Children and grandchildren, after all, are expected to defer to older family members. Moreover, in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines, the wish of a dying person is often thought of as something that one should not refuse. In the case of the *manughilót* and other local healers, it is thought that declining to accept or continue the practice of healing comes at the risk of illness and possibly death for the recalcitrant family member (Ponteras 1980: 177).

Yet, Tita Dolor's refusal did not mean that no transmission occurred. Tita Dolor narrated how her sister Tita Angeles inherited their grandmother's skills and know-how as a *manughilót*. Tita Angeles turned out to be knowledgeable about herbal medicine, and indeed, grew medicinal plants in the garden of her school. She also knew how to prepare herb-infused oil and alcohol liniments. What was surprising, according to Tita Dolor, was that no one taught her sister how to be a *manughilót*. It must run in the family, she supposed.

I take these stories concerning the transmission of the ability to heal as accounts of how becoming professional may promote personal autonomy and weaken intergenerational and other kinship ties. Here, the founding of a *linyada* of teachers emerges as having enabled Tita Dolor to 'cut' (Strathern 1996) the *linyada* of *manughilót*. At the same time, these stories allude to how, despite such cutting, kinship ties were not totally severed—there was an unrelenting character to such ties. Indeed, as I will return to below and in other chapters, for my interlocutors, the achievement of upward mobility through educational and professional pursuits does not, ideally,

imply the breaching of ties, even if such an expectation may not be realised. As such, the autonomy, which the pursuit of teaching and other professions implied, was not that of free-floating monads, but of persons embedded in kinship ties and who are able to make their own judgments and shape their lives.

From a life-course perspective, the attainment of autonomy in Iloilo and other parts of the Philippines and island Southeast Asia is most closely associated with marriage, the formation of separate households, and the birth of children (Aguilar *et al.* 2009; Carsten 1997; Jocano 1969; Stoodley 1957). At the same time, married persons are still expected to extend help to their siblings, and to attend to their parents' needs, albeit this expectation is more pronounced for women than men (see Chapters 5 & 6). Amongst the Mahilway teacher-siblings, the pursuit of teaching careers provided some impetus to marriage projects. As their careers unfolded in Negros, so did their social world expand. Both Tita Remy and Tita Angeles met their future husbands in the island, and there they eventually established their own households – Tita Angeles in the late 1970s, and Tita Remy in 1986, after the death of Lolo Minong. Tita Angeles's husband was a co-teacher, whilst Tita Remy met her husband when he visited a cousin who had been staying in the same boarding-house.

Tita Dolor also met her fiancé in Bacolod, although this did not result in a marriage. They were engaged sometime in the mid 1970s, but it was forcibly called off after Lolo Minong heard rumours that one of Tita Dolor's fiancé's relatives maligned the Mahilways' reputation—to the effect that the Mahilways were supposedly *indi madutlan* (difficult to permeate or infiltrate, referring to the family's close-knittedness; also, difficult to penetrate, in a sexual sense). Although her mother encouraged Tita Dolor to get married in Bacolod without Lolo Minong's knowledge, Tita Dolor chose to obey her father as she did not want to risk her father's health given his congenital heart condition. This biographical information, however, was never mentioned by Tita Dolor. It was shared with me by one of her sisters only during my last week in the field—in a hushed voice, away from the house, and always looking over her shoulders to see if her older sister was approaching us.

Notably, for the Mahilway siblings and their contemporaries and predecessors, marriage decisions were heavily influenced by parents—ideally, a person would not marry without their parents' consent and support. For upwardly

mobile families, children's marriage decisions were tied to ideals of hypergamy. At the same time, there was scope for children to disobey their parents. We have seen this in the previous chapter, when the eldest, Tita Mila, earned Lolo Minong's resentment when she married a man of lower social standing. Similarly, Mrs Delgado's choice for a husband, who had less education, initially did not have her father's sanction, but after she and her then boyfriend eloped to a neighbouring town, they were able to secure a parental blessing to get married. As such, marriage decisions not only led to the obtainment of autonomy, but was also a potential site for parents and children to assert their respective wills.

I will return to Tita Dolor's non-marriage in this chapter's penultimate section, but for now, I wish to emphasise that, in her accounts, what she foregrounded instead was how her sojourn in Negros fomented further mobility. Here, the line that was the teaching profession led to lines of flight: to Luzon, then to the US. For the most part, she spoke of this development through the idiom of boredom, of how the everyday grind of teaching can be repetitive and dull. It was, she said, because of such boredom that she decided to apply for, and received in the late 1970s, a scholarship for a two-year Master's degree in special education at one of the leading universities in Manila. Thus, amongst her siblings, she was the most educated.

After finishing her Master's degree, she returned to Bacolod as her scholarship stipulated a three-year bond, during which time she taught special education classes for advanced ('gifted') pupils in the city. After completing the bond, she opted to resign from her job. At this point, she said, she was already bored teaching children. She transferred to Bataan in Luzon island, where, in a United Nations-run refugee camp, she taught English language to Vietnamese and other Indochinese refugees transitioning via the Philippines to the United States, but also to other destination countries (see Mortland 1987).

She considered her move as a refreshing change. Not only did she teach adults, but she also received a much higher salary than she previously received from the state-run school in Bacolod. The refugee camp in Bataan, including the English as second language (ESL) programme—at that time considered to be the largest in the world—was funded by the United States Department of State (Morgan 1985).

Refugees were taught the basics of the English language and were introduced to various elements of the American way of life, such as how to deal with bureaucracies or how to navigate the public transportation system.

In 1988, a few months after her youngest sister migrated to the US (see Chapter 4), Tita Dolor also moved to New York after successfully applying for a teaching job. Her narration of this part of her life was reminiscent of how she and her siblings employed an aesthetic of difficulty in describing their educational pursuits (see Chapter 2). She foregrounded how she overcame her initial hesitation, and how she triumphed during the interview process despite being unprepared to undertake a teaching demonstration. Likewise, she emphasised how, through Lola Ising's efforts, she overcame financial obstacles related to travel and visa expenses. She stayed in New York for eight years, during which she taught in several schools. Thus, for eight years, she enjoyed being a successful professional and middle-class Filipino. Migrating to the US, after all, had been and indeed, during my fieldwork, continued to be, a key middle class aspiration in the Philippines, a theme that I return to in the next chapter.

Tita Dolor's narrations of this chapter of her life often centred on how she asserted herself professionally. She had to defend her credentials by, for instance, explaining to colleagues why Filipina teachers perform well in the US. 'Our educational system's modelled after that of America,' she recalled telling her co-workers, an explanation that had sound historical basis. She also admitted to boasting (*tikal*) and lying to her colleagues that all Filipino immigrants in the US are professionals. Although historically, most Filipino immigrants to the US take up professional occupations, a small proportion engages in non-professional work, including domestic and care work (Parreñas 2015 [2001]; Tyner 1999).

A story that often figured in our conversations was about her first job in the city. Tita Dolor was assigned a kindergarten class composed mostly of blacks and Latinos. Her colleagues encouraged her to be strict and not to smile at her pupils, especially during her first day of teaching; they also told her that should her pupils become rowdy, she should not hesitate to shout at them. Tita Dolor told them, rather proudly, that she would not shout at her pupils, for Filipino teachers are not trained

to do so. Yet, she eventually did. ‘They’re all brats,’ she said. She even took a pupil by the arm to have everyone seated.

This incident, however, caused her anxiety over the possibility of being accused of child abuse by the pupil’s parents. She recalled not being able to sleep, worried that she had left a welt on her pupil’s arm. Drawing on prevailing stereotypes of blacks and Latinos as welfare dependents (see Boris 2007), she portrayed the parents of her school’s pupils as jobless people who made money by filing cases for make-believe infractions. After a few days in the position, Tita Dolor resigned, supposedly despite the principal’s pleasure in her performance, who, she claimed, went as far as to distribute copies of her lesson plan to her colleagues. Her fear of being sanctioned for child abuse was too powerful, she said. She thus transferred to a community college, where she taught English language to immigrants, mostly professionals looking for a job in the United States. This represented for her a continuation of her old job in Bataan.

I do not know if Tita Dolor was telling the truth when she said that she resigned out of her own volition, or if, in fact, she was punished for handling her pupil roughly. What was clear, however, was that she had internalised a racialized view of the world. For instance, in addition to the negative depiction of her pupils’ parents mentioned above, she also claimed to have avoided riding in a subway carriage unless there was a white person riding in it, associating criminality with blacks and other persons of colour. The history of racism and racial thinking amongst Filipinos is complex and beyond the scope of this chapter, but what I would emphasise here is such thinking depends partly on ideas of descent (see Aguilar 2005; Banton 1998 [1987]). Indeed, the Hiligaynon word for ‘race,’ *linahe*, is derived from the Spanish *linaje*, which, in turn, means ‘lineage’ and is synonymous with *raza*, ‘race.’⁶

In 1996, Tita Dolor’s sojourn in New York was cut short when she became ill with stomach ulcers. With no one to look after her, as her sister Tita Monica was also busy with her own work, with no significant savings of her own, and with no green card, Tita Dolor had no choice but to return to Santa Rosa. Yet, like her earlier sojourns, Tita Dolor described her repatriation in terms of getting tired and bored of

⁶ In Tagalog and Filipino, the corresponding term is *lahi*.

her life. She no longer wanted to teach, she said. The founder of the lineage of teachers thus went home.

Memories amidst decline

In contemplating the memories that I have presented here, I am drawn to the contrast between these memories' emphasis on achievement and the pride which they invoked, and the prevailing status of the teaching profession in the Philippines during the time I was in the field.

As I have made clear, entry to the teaching profession in the immediate post-war decades accorded some prestige to upwardly-mobile families and individuals. Yet, starting in the late 1970s, the prestige of the teaching profession fast disappeared for several reasons, including stagnant wages, increased work load due to enlarged class sizes and additional responsibilities (e.g. running local and national elections, especially after the restoration of formal democracy in 1986), and the general decrease of state support for public education (Luz 2011: esp. chap. 5; Savellano 1999).

Thus, stereotypes of state school teachers loomed large in the national consciousness. Teachers began to be thought of as, at best, intellectually average, for the best students took more prestigious courses (Savellano 1999: 260). They were also imagined as quintessentially entrepreneurial, as persons compelled to sell various goods in order to augment their small salaries. Thus, part of the lyrics of the song '*Titser*,' which became popular in the 1980s amongst activists, may be translated as: 'life's difficult, no wonder you're a part-time vendor of imported goods, underwear, and sausages.'⁷ There too was the phenomenon of teachers leaving the Philippines to become domestic and care workers abroad, as has been documented in a number of accounts (see Constable 2007 [1997]; Lan 2006; Parreñas 2015 [2001]).

The decline in the status of teaching was very much present in the memories that I elicited from my interlocutors. It was, to begin with, referred to whenever they

⁷ The untranslated line is '*Sa hirap ng buhay, ika'y part-time na tindera ng mga PX goods, panty, bra, longganisa.*'

spoke of teachers leaving the profession for more financially rewarding occupations. As mentioned above, this was the case with Tita Olive and their cousin Lucing. Mrs Delgado, too, who, as I indicated, rose through the ranks to become principal, left the profession in the early 1990s to sell insurance plans full-time, which she had previously been doing alongside her day job.

In a more implicit manner, the teaching profession's decline was registered through the exclusion of kin from the *linyada* of teachers. I have already mentioned how descriptions of the Mahilway siblings as such a *linyada* sometimes excluded their cousins. Later in my fieldwork, I realised that in addition to these cousins, similarly excluded was the daughter of one of their maternal cousins, who also became a teacher in Iloilo, and was one of Lola Ising's foster children. That cousin's daughter was the generational contemporary of the Mahilway grandchildren, most of whom pursued health-related professions (see Chapter 4)—by the time she became a teacher, the profession was no longer prestigious. As far as I could tell, her pursuit of the profession stemmed from the relatively low cost of an education degree, as well as the fact that as a foster child, she was in no position to insist on a more expensive degree.

More often and obliquely, teaching's decline was spoken of in terms of teachers' inability to be strict and inflict corporal punishment on their pupils. This diminished capacity, in turn, was attributed to the increased willingness of pupils and their parents to report incidences of physical punishment—now considered as instances of violence and maltreatment—to the authorities, but most especially the media. Unlike in the past, my interlocutors claimed, parents now tended to defend their children.

Conditions appear to have started changing in the 1990s when a leading national television channel launched a segment, and later a full programme, that actively solicited and featured reports and complaints from viewers. It focussed on abusive, corrupt, and underperforming authorities and bureaucrats. The same network later launched another segment that highlighted and actively campaigned

against child abuse.⁸ These programmes featured reports on teachers who meted out physical punishment to children. Other media—including Iloilo’s *Bombo Radyo*—followed suit, and during my fieldwork, it was common for the media to feature reports of abuse (including those that went viral on the internet) submitted by their viewers or readers. In response, state officials sought to implement laws and policies prohibiting the physical punishment of schoolchildren.⁹

Strictness, however, had other resonances amongst the Mahilways. It was not just evocative of the lost prestige of the teaching profession, but was very much embodied in Tita Dolor. Her younger sister, Tita Remy, whilst admitting that she too was a strict teacher, qualified that outside the classroom, she was not. She contrasted herself with her older sister, who she described as extremely strict both inside and outside the classroom, and even after retirement.

Tita Dolor’s strictness was often the subject of conversations and jokes amongst her kin. She was sometimes referred to her behind her back as the family’s ‘supervisor’—a reference to her tendency to boss others around. For instance, a common source of irritation between Tita Dolor and Tita Amy was the former’s proclivity to lock the cupboards and cabinets in the main house, supposedly to regulate the use of household items. Tita Dolor likewise was not fond of Tita Amy’s sons, who she considered as lacking in propriety. One of them supposedly allowed a female classmate to enter his room, which Tita Dolor interpreted as bordering on the immoral, as it could have led to sex; the other was described by Tita Dolor as unable to control his appetite. Consequently, the two brothers had a frosty relationship with Tita Dolor, as they were often scolded by her.

At the same time, Tita Dolor was dependent on Tita Amy and her family. As I elaborate in Chapter 6, she depended on Tita Amy for her food every day. When she had a heart attack several years before my fieldwork, it was Tita Amy who paid for her medical expenses. It was Tita Amy’s sons who rushed her to the hospital, and

⁸ These segments and programme were *Hoy, Gising!* (Hey, Wake Up!) and *Bantay Bata* (Children’s Watch). For an historical account of the emergence of this genre of television shows, see J.C. Ong (2015c).

⁹ See, e.g., <http://www.deped.gov.ph/press-releases/deped-boosts-child-protection-policy-schools>, accessed 23 February 2017.

they took turns watching over her. Whenever Tita Dolor needed to go to the surgery for her periodic consultations with the doctor, the older nephew would drive her. In this sense, Tita Dolor, ended up in her old age as perhaps the least autonomous of all the teachers in the family.

One explanation that I heard regarding Tita Dolor's strictness was couched in terms of her having 'too much' education, and of her taking being a teacher too seriously. Whilst strictness in the classroom was deemed acceptable and even worthy of praise, amongst one's kin, it was not. Education was also the explanation proffered for why Tita Dolor remained unmarried. Although she had suitors during her younger years, the story went, she rejected most of them as they were not good enough for her. Referring to the upwardly-mobile ideal of hypergamy, she supposedly preferred those equally or more educated than she was; suitors from Santa Rosa and neighbouring villages failed to meet her standards.

Tita Dolor herself voiced this explanation, emphasising that remaining unmarried was much preferable to getting married to an irresponsible and dependent man. Such a preference clearly drew upon a locally shared representation of men as prone to vices, especially gambling, womanising, and alcoholism, an issue that I discuss further in Chapter 5. At the same time, Tita Dolor's explanation must be seen in the context of her broken engagement discussed above. As I have hinted at, her pursuit of further education and work outside of Negros may have been a response to her broken engagement.

Demographers of the Philippines have noted that beginning in the early 1900s, but especially since the 1960s, marriage has been increasingly delayed, especially for educated women from younger cohorts in urban areas—a pattern that has continued to the 2000s, and which has been attributed to increased educational and professional opportunities, the outmigration of men (particularly for some regions, such as Northern Luzon), increase in cohabitation, and economic hindrances to formal marriage (Abalos 2014; Concepcion & P.C. Smith 1977; P.C. Smith 1975; Xenos & Kabamalan 2007; Xenos & Gultiano 1992). At the same time, marriage has remained 'nearly universal,' with only about 6 to 7 per cent of men and women never marrying after their mid 40s (Abalos 2014: 1631).

As Allerton (2007) has rightly pointed out, demographic analyses do not capture the full range of what remaining unmarried might mean in each context. In Santa Rosa, there were multiple and ambivalent meanings. For an adult to be unmarried was, in a sense, to be incomplete. As I have already indicated, marriage and household formation were closely linked to ideals of autonomy and social adulthood. Remaining unmarried also had the potential to raise questions about one's personality, and at times, even sexuality. It likewise implied 'pastness,' in the sense of being beyond one's prime (here, the mid 30s to early 40s was the usual threshold), but also somewhat old-fashioned. The Hiligaynon term for unmarried adults, *laon*, conveys these meanings, as it also refers to old or mature crops (Kaufmann 1900).

Although both men and women who never married were described as *laon*, unmarried men were more likely to be teased or be the subject of side comments and hushed conversations. Jocano's (1969: 64; 1983: 198) earlier descriptions of Panay link this gender asymmetry to the expectation, most pronounced amongst men, that they would be able to win a spouse; for women, remaining unmarried was not deemed particularly shameful, and claims that they wish to be a *laon* were often used to fend off unwanted suitors. In Santa Rosa, the non-shamefulness of being *laon* was clear in the way that, in general, it was not used to insult or cast aspersion, particularly on women. At most, it was considered a matter of benign amusement.

In fact, *laon* members of the family were often considered positively, and here the people of Santa Rosa bore resemblance to the Manggarai (Allerton 2007). This view was particularly vivid in the case of unmarried siblings who helped send their younger siblings to school, in which case becoming *laon* often had connotations of sacrifice (see Chapter 2). The same positive view applied to unmarried uncles and aunts who supported and doted on their nephews and nieces. Ethnographers of the Philippines and island Southeast Asia have long noted how the unmarried often cultivate ties with their adult siblings and their siblings' children, partly to ensure care during old age, but which also implies that descriptions of unmarried persons as incomplete or alone need to be tempered (Allerton 2007; Griffiths 1986; Nydegger & Nydegger 1966).

In the case of Tita Dolor, however, it was the less congenial aspects of the *laon* that was foregrounded by her kin, notwithstanding the allusions mentioned above to her being a dutiful daughter, given her earlier obedience to Lolo Minong's command to break off her engagement. It was in this vein that she was often depicted as extremely strict, domineering, and even selfish. In addition to being hawk-eyed when it came to household items, it was made clear to me that Tita Dolor did not support her younger siblings and their children when she was still working. In this manner, the conversations and jokes pertaining to Tita Dolor being strict and *laon* may be viewed as comments on the ways that she had become disconnected from her siblings and their children. The pursuit of autonomy and prestige, which Tita Dolor undertook through her teaching career, also attenuated her kinship ties.

The recounting of the less pleasant aspects of Tita Dolor's biography may perhaps be considered as an inverse of the picture that Munn (1986) drew some time ago through her engagement with her Gawan interlocutors. Instead of the expansion of a person's reputation in time and space owing to the cultivation of ties of exchange and reciprocity, the telling of such biographical aspects worked to diminish reputation precisely by foregrounding the absence of exchange.

It was perhaps the case that Tita Dolor was aware of the circulation of stories that was occurring behind her back. It was in this vein, I suspect, that she often invoked a history of unmarried men and women amongst her maternal and paternal ancestors as an explanation for her being *laon*. 'So, don't be surprised,' she told me not just once. In the same way that she and her siblings would recite the names of the teachers in the family, she would often present the names of these unmarried kin, as if to emphasise that she was not alone in being unmarried.

Conclusion

In the context that I have delineated here, the teaching profession as a line connected the lives of siblings. Yet to speak of this line in terms of commonality would be to conceal differences in how the pursuit of teaching careers was experienced and recalled by the siblings. Those who began the lineage emphasised their achievements

and the overcoming of obstacles along the way. Those following the path of an older sibling foregrounded how decisions were made for them and how they had to live with those decisions; they justified such decisions in terms of how they made sense in terms of job security and stability.

What united both ways of recalling, however, was how forays into teaching careers were disturbed by the lack of appropriate economic rewards bestowed upon the profession: no distinctions of salaries were made on the basis of the prestige of one's alma mater, and teachers' salaries were very much modest compared to other professions. In foregrounding achievements and job security and stability, memories recuperated agency for those whose aspirations and careers were heavily shaped by prevailing economic structures and social relations, including gender norms. Placed in the circumstances of retirement, ageing, and dependence on one's kin, some of the recollections conjured a self that is unencumbered by limits and that is on the road to more and more success.

The narratives of teaching that I have discussed here charted movements both upwards and outwards. Upwards to respectability, authority, and middle-classness, but also outwards to personal autonomy and out of the shadows of parental control. Given the gendered composition of the teaching profession, such movements were particularly consequential for women. Teaching careers allowed them to disrupt the long-standing association amongst femininity, immobility, and domesticity. Yet, the movements engendered by the teaching profession were precarious, uneven, or incomplete. As the decline of the teaching profession indicates, the basis of such movements disappeared over time. Moreover, the narratives presented here underscore how these movements carried the risk of rupturing one's ties with siblings and other kin, even as they, at least for some, instantiated desired selves.

Finally, some of the stories that I have pursued here suggest not only how siblings can be intimately aware of each other's biographies, but also how they are in a position to contest each other's biographies. Transmitted as jokes or in hushed voices, such stories present a darker, but no less important, side of familial history.



Figure 15. A young nurse on the phone

Chapter 4

‘Perhaps we can already build a hospital’: migration, expectations, and narrations

Transnational labour migration has been, as I discussed in the Introduction, central to contemporary class relations in the Philippines. As Aguilar (2014: 4-5) has described, social mobility for many, and consequently, the growth of the middle classes in the country, has been enabled by forays overseas. This became the case especially after the Philippine state began in the 1970s to broker the outmigration of workers. Remittances from abroad have fuelled the consumption practices of emergent and aspirational middle class households, and companies—including real estate developers, automobile dealers, telecommunication firms, and banks—have targeted these households precisely for their spending power.

The relationship amongst transnational migration, social mobility, and the middle classes is, however, saturated with tensions, contradictions, and ambivalence. Upward mobility through overseas migration may come at the price of downward mobility through deprofessionalisation and deskilling—as when teachers and other highly-educated professionals take up domestic and care work (Kelly 2012; Parreñas 2015 [2001]). Members of the upper and more established middle classes likewise reassert class and moral superiority by, for instance, portraying upwardly mobile migrants as lacking taste and refinement notwithstanding their new-found ability to purchase (imported) consumer goods previously inaccessible to them (Pinches 2001). There too is the shame experienced by middle and upper class Filipinos both within and outwith the Philippines because of the ubiquity of Filipino domestic and care workers and the consequent threat of being misrecognised as such (Aguilar 1996).

Meanwhile, the outmigration of professionals, especially doctors and nurses, has generated concerns over the implications of ‘brain drain’ and ‘care drain’ on the country’s public health system. At various points in the post-war history of the Philippines, migrant health professionals have been perceived as endangering the

country's public health, and at times as abandoning the nation (see Cruz 2012). These migrants too have been taken to embody the inadequacies of the Philippine state, which has failed to invest substantially in social services. Moreover, much like the anxieties surrounding domestic and care workers, the preponderance of nurses amongst migrant health professionals—including those who originally trained in other professions, even medicine—has given rise to concerns amongst elite migrants about Filipinos being stereotyped as nurses (Benedicto 2009).

This chapter contributes to understanding of the nexus of migration (especially of health professionals), social mobility, and middle-classness by charting how migratory moves arose from and shaped histories of aspirations, relations, and obligations. By foregrounding these histories, this chapter gives us pause in describing migrant (professional) Filipinos using only the language of exodus, loss, and abandonment. Instead, the material I discuss here illuminates how migration was entangled with notions of success and autonomy (especially vis-à-vis one's siblings), but also with multiple forms of the 'work of time' (Das 2007), including coincidence, luck, and waiting.

Migration was entwined too with generational connections and disconnections, the engendering of inequalities, and reversals in hierarchical relations amongst siblings. Indeed, it gave rise to new obligations and expectations that were at once sources of status and authority for migrants, but also of vulnerability to excessive demands, ingratitude, and even theft. Whilst some of these obligations and expectations and their repercussions lent themselves easily to narrations of family history and personal biography, others did not and had to be spoken of indirectly or—perhaps unsurprisingly—were articulated by a sibling. Thus, this chapter highlights how migratory moves and the broader journeys of upward mobility they form part of may be precipitated by the strains of siblingship, and how such moves and journeys may both invigorate and impair ties between siblings and other kin.

Nursing history

Born in 1961 and the youngest of the Mahilway siblings, Tita Monica became a nurse. This set her apart from most of her sisters, who, as we have seen in the previous chapter, pursued careers in teaching. By the time I first met her in 2014, she had been working for twenty-six years in the neonatal intensive care unit of a public hospital in New York City. Before that, she worked in hospitals in Manila and in Saudi Arabia for several years each. Seen from the perspective of generations, she represented a turning point, for her profession was closer to that of the next generation than of her older sisters.

Of the eighteen surviving Mahilway grandchildren, eight were working overseas as health professionals. Three were in the US, another three in the UK, and one each in Australia and Canada. Most of them were nurses, although one was a medical technologist and another, a pharmacist. One of the nurses was originally a doctor, but retrained to become a nurse in the US. Amongst the eight who remained in the Philippines, two were still attending university (with one pursuing a degree in radiography); one worked as a nurse in the Gulf before returning to Iloilo to establish a photography studio with her husband; and still another trained as a nurse, but became a distributor for a nutraceutical marketing company. Not one of the eighteen pursued a career in teaching.

The generational shift inaugurated by Tita Monica was a source of pride for the family. The Mahilways were amongst the first of the old-timer families in the village to have had a health professional in the family. Tita Monica was, in particular, a pioneering nurse; she was also one of the very first to have emigrated to the US. Although a number of her contemporaries also took up nursing, most of them ended up working in the Middle East. Those who emigrated to the US, Europe, and Australia were slightly younger than her or belonged to the succeeding generation. To illustrate, in another old-timer family, Tita Monica's age-mate migrated to Qatar. That age-mate's youngest sibling, born ten years later, had been working as a nurse in Las Vegas.

Moreover, the Mahilways was considered exceptional in having a large proportion of the grandchildren working as health professionals abroad. Within the

grandchildren's generation (i.e. those born in the 1970s up to the 1990s), their contemporaries from the other old-timer families mostly pursued careers in merchant seamanship (see Chapter 5), or a variety of professions that included nursing and other health occupations, but such health occupations were not as predominant in those families as they were amongst the Mahilways.

Hence, on the same afternoon when she proudly narrated and laid claim over the educational achievements of her children (see Chapter 2), Lola Ising emphasised too just how many of her grandchildren were working as health professionals abroad. 'They're no longer here. They're all overseas,' she declared to me. Perhaps realising how exaggerated her claim was, she immediately qualified her earlier statement. 'Only two of them are here,' she said, referring to Tita Amy's youngest sons who were still in university. Alluding to her grandchildren's professions, she then told me, 'perhaps we can already build (*kapatindog*) a hospital.' Visibly pleased, she then laughed, her eyes almost disappearing.

In Iloilo and other parts of the Philippines, an overseas career in the health professions had become an important marker of success and was often aspired for by the upwardly mobile. Health professions were, to begin with, historically accorded with prestige and respectability. This was particularly true for medicine, which, during the Spanish period, was a restricted profession. Only the male children of the *mestizo* land-owning class could become medical doctors, as only one elite university in Manila offered a programme in medicine and this was limited to male students; an alternative was to send sons to medical schools in Europe (W. Anderson 2007). During the American period, medicine and public health were key areas of colonial intervention. Medical doctors were important figures of authority, and elite families continued to send their children to medical schools, including in the US, this time partly through colonial scholarship programmes. Filipino doctors were amongst those who rose in the colonial bureaucracy (W. Anderson 2006; 2007). After the Philippines gained independence in 1946, medicine continued to be a prestigious profession (Cariño 1973; Castillo 1962; Tiryakian 1958), not least because of the amount of time and expenses entailed by a medical degree.

Nursing, which was introduced as part of the American 'civilising' mission, was aimed at (but never restricted to) women, especially those from elite families.

From the very start, the allure of the profession was shaped by the possibility of travelling to and working abroad, particularly the US. As Choy (2003) has documented, the study abroad programme during the American occupation and the exchange visitor scheme in the 1960s helped cultivate the nursing profession's image as an avenue for travel and adventure. These programmes likewise entrenched nursing's reputation as a route towards economic prosperity given the post-war devaluation of the peso relative to the dollar (see also Castillo 1962: 154). Notably, the first nursing school in the Philippines, the Iloilo Mission Hospital School of Nursing, was established by Presbyterian missionaries in the district of La Paz in 1906, and preceded by two years the American colonial government's own nursing school in Manila (Klein 1915).

After 1965, nursing's popularity was heightened further when the US passed a new immigration act, which allowed Filipino nurses and other professionals to immigrate and acquire residency and citizenship. The Philippine state's promotion of migration beginning in the 1970s contributed too to the popularity of nursing (Choy 2003: 114-17). Moreover, chronic shortages of nurses in the US, along with emerging demands for nurses in other countries (mostly those with ageing populations and where the nursing profession did not have much prestige) converged to bolster nursing's popularity in the Philippines. Compared with medicine, a nursing degree entailed far less time and resources, and there were fewer restrictions to practising the profession in the US and elsewhere. It was during the early 1980s that Tita Monica became a nurse.

By the early 2000s, nursing migration was at its peak; nursing education followed suit, as a record number of nursing programmes and colleges were established across the Philippines (Masselink & Lee 2010). During this period too, as I have mentioned, medicine graduates and practising doctors took 'second coursers' in nursing in a drive to land a better-paying job abroad (Lorenzo *et al.* 2007), thus furthering the anxiety that I sketched at the beginning of this chapter. Meanwhile, other allied health professions, such as physical therapy and medical technology, followed in the footsteps of nursing, and they also became avenues for migration (Arends-Kuenning *et al.* 2015). It was during this period that most of the Mahilway grandchildren who became health professionals went to university.

Nursing's popularity continued until the mid 2000s, when because of the sheer number of nursing graduates, it became increasingly difficult to find jobs both within and outwith the Philippines (Arends-Kuenning *et al.* 2015). This development coincided with lower demand and increased restriction in several countries. Nursing graduates in fact have had to pay hospitals to allow them to 'volunteer' and gain experience that would qualify them for jobs overseas. There were also concerns that nursing programmes were not regulated properly by the state, and that licensure examinations were plagued by leakages, thus compromising the reputation abroad of a Philippine nursing degree (Masselink & Lee 2013; 2010). Notably, although some of the nurses amongst the Mahilway grandchildren graduated from university amidst the profession's crash, the help that they received from Tita Monica (see below) allowed them to weather this difficult period.

During my fieldwork, nursing and nursing migration were only beginning to regain the popularity that they had lost. A young woman, who was born in 1986, and who I became close with, graduated from nursing college four years before my arrival. Because of the glut of applicants to hospitals, she had been working for the village council as a community nurse, to fulfil the work experience required for jobs overseas. When I arrived in 2014, she was considering working in the UK, although by the time I left the field, she had decided to go to Germany instead, where a maternal cousin had been working. Her younger sister graduated from nursing college the previous year, and was also contemplating on migrating to Germany. Notably, a significant proportion of the nurses who attended to Lola Ising in the hospital had left for abroad or were preparing to do so when I left Iloilo in March 2015. During my and the Mahilway family's conversation with these nurses, they described how the hospital they were working for had a high turnover rate because of overseas migration.

Finally, although nurses and other health professionals have also migrated to other countries, the US continued to be a preferred destination. Reasons for such a preference included the immigrant visas issued by the US, hence, the possibility of gaining citizenship. Moreover, compared to currencies of countries such as the UK, Canada, and Australia (where it is also possible to become a permanent resident and

citizen), the US dollar was stronger and thus meant stronger purchasing power in the Philippines.

Amongst my interlocutors, there was a recognition too that nurses in the US can earn more than their counterparts in other destination countries as they are paid on an hourly rate. Not incidentally, as Cannell (1999: chap. 10) has demonstrated, American ideals and standards permeate both dominant and popular understandings of modernity and culture in the Philippines. In fact, Philippine nationhood has been, at least until the dispersal of Filipino migrants across the globe, defined in relation to the US (Aguilar 1996). As I return to below, working in the US was something that Tita Monica aspired for. It also set her apart from her nurse-contemporaries in Santa Rosa, as well as some of her nieces and nephews, who, as I have indicated, have migrated to other countries.

A nurse, not a teacher

Despite the unequivocal pride, there was a palpable thinness in the accounts that I received from the Mahilways regarding their migrant health professional kin, especially at the start of my fieldwork. During this time, Tita Monica and the others were overseas; it would not be until Lola Ising's illness and death that I would meet them. Moreover, as I discussed at the start of this thesis, the initial purpose of my conversations with the Mahilways centred on the village's history. That I initially spent time conversing with Lola Ising and Tita Dolor also shaped the contours of my knowledge about the family. 'She left during that year.' 'She's the only nurse amongst us.' 'The grandchildren are now professionals too.' Tita Monica and the other health professionals in the family had a fleeting presence in these initial conversations. They were like valuable artefacts that I could only view from afar. It was through their absence that they were made legible to me.

Even when I eventually met Tita Monica and some of my migrant classificatory cousins, my knowledge of them remained fragmentary. Tita Monica herself shared parts of her biography whilst we were in the guests' lounge, waiting for Lola Ising's visitation hours, but these conversations were often interrupted by a

nurse bringing a prescription, by the arrival of visitors or the attending physicians, or by her need to go to the cash machine. As I elaborated in the Introduction, I likewise hesitated in asking questions that might be construed as related to doing research. I chose to simply listen to whatever stories my hosts were willing to share whilst passing time.

The most substantive, and perhaps longest, narration that I heard from Tita Monica occurred on New Year's Day, some two weeks after Lola Ising's funeral. Despite sleeping late due to the previous night's celebration, Tita Monica woke up early, and was already seated on the porch by the time I woke up. Although I intended to sleep in, I was woken up early, at seven o'clock, when Tita Monica's nephew, Patrick, went inside the room I slept in. He roused his cousins Mark and Echo, who I shared the room with, as they were to drop him off at the airport. Unbeknownst to his aunts, Patrick was to leave for Manila that morning after two months of helping care for Lola Ising. A marine transportation undergraduate, Patrick had yet to complete the internship period required for graduation, but he opted instead to drive for his father in Manila whilst looking for a job in a call centre. He was not interested in becoming a merchant seaman despite the profession's financial rewards. His aunts, including Tita Monica, were dismayed over what they saw as his lack of seriousness. Before he left for the airport, Tita Amy and Tita Monica reminded him, as they did over the Christmas holidays, to think more about his future.

I will discuss Patrick's and his father Tito Celso's stories in subsequent chapters (see Chapters 5 and 7), but what interests me for now is Tita Monica's reaction to her nephew's surprise departure for Manila. We had not had breakfast at this point, and lacking adequate sleep, I was unprepared to listen to Tita Monica. She, on the other hand, was keen on talking. Patrick's departure triggered her to recount her own path to the nursing profession, and in doing so, emphasised her will and determination. 'You know,' she explained to me, 'I really wanted to become a nurse so I can work abroad (*makalabas*, Tag.) and have a better life (*makaahon*, Tag.)'.

After Tita Monica graduated from high school, her older teacher-siblings wanted her to follow their path. They offered to send her to university, if she took an education degree, or less preferably, a degree in commerce, as these were established

professional paths and were deemed practicable. Tita Monica flatly refused the offer and insisted that she would not pursue either degree. She wanted to become a nurse. Her sisters and other family members tried to convince her, but she was resolute. Eventually, Tita Monica issued a threat: she would not go to university unless she was allowed to study nursing. Her siblings relented, and she was enrolled at the institution and degree programme of her choice.

Amongst the people I worked with in Santa Rosa, although parents and other older kin may try to influence a child's educational preferences, there was a recognition that such preferences ought to be respected, unless there are considerable material and other constraints. Moreover, whilst Tita Monica did not explicitly say so, I suspect that being the youngest of the siblings gave her some leeway in deciding what degree programme to pursue in college. As with the Philippines and Southeast Asia more generally, the youngest child in the family is often treated indulgently by older kin (Carsten 1997: 88; S. Errington 1989: 212; M.A. Gonzalez 1965: 30). Indeed, it is not surprising for the youngest child to be spoilt. Telling of this privileged position, within the family, Tita Monica was known as '*agot*' (literally 'youngest'), a nickname that she had been using since she was a child.

It was also true that by the time Tita Monica went to college in the late 1970s, the family had slightly more resources at their disposal. Most of her older siblings had graduated and were already employed. This meant slightly more money to pay for tuition and other expenses. Although Tita Monica was not sent to nursing college by her older siblings, she benefitted from not having to compete with them in relation to the family's resources. Degree programmes that were previously too expensive to pursue were now within reach, or at the very least, no longer outright impossibilities. Notably, as I will return to in Chapter 6, Tita Amy, who was immediately older than Tita Monica, even considered going to medical school.

Her decision to become a nurse, Tita Monica told me, coincided with the introduction of a nursing degree programme by a local institution, the Western Visayas State College (previously the Iloilo Normal School; during my fieldwork, it was already a university). Because of its public funding, the state college's tuition fee was far more affordable compared to other nursing colleges in Iloilo. Previously, only private (and religious) institutions offered degree programmes in nursing in the city.

Echoing Tita Dolor's experience at teaching college almost two decades earlier, Tita Monica passed a highly competitive entrance examination and joined a small number of fellow students to form, in 1977, the college's first cohort of nursing students. As such, her pursuit of a nursing degree was, in a way, the realisation of a dream first aspired for by her eldest sister, Tita Caring (see Chapter 2), who was 23 years her senior. 'The family couldn't afford it in the past. I'm lucky because West opened a nursing programme at the right time,' Tita Monica recalled.

Equally important was that, by that time, the teaching profession's prestige and desirability were on the decline (see Cortes 1980). More and more teachers graduated each year, and this created a surplus of applicants to the Philippine public school system. Whilst there were private schools, salaries were not as competitive as in public schools, especially in non-elite private schools outside Metro Manila. State school teachers, meanwhile, were overburdened with a chronic lack of classrooms and instructional materials, and non-teaching responsibilities. The surplus of teachers likewise led to them being perceived as less intelligent relative to their counterparts in medicine, law, dentistry, and other more prestigious professions. If a student were smart and the family had the means, a degree in education would not be a top choice.

Here, Tita Monica's use of the word '*makaahon*' (from the root word '*ahon*') is illuminating. Often used to convey a movement out of a body of water, it is also used, as Tita Monica did, to signify movement out of poverty. It is also used to mean movement out of ill repute (as in *ahon sa putikan*, Tag., which literally means to rise out of the mud, but which connotes not only extreme poverty, but in many cases, moral depravity). In some cases, the mud is replaced by quicksand, often to indicate a situation that portends to overpower those afflicted by it. Hence, Tita Monica's use of *makaahon* suggests she imagined nursing not just as a vehicle out of poverty, but also a means to avoid being stuck in a profession that, whilst in the past accrued prestige and respectability to the family, threatened to restrict further gains and even reverse them.

A difficult path

Resonating with accounts that I had heard from her siblings, which foregrounded an aesthetic of difficulty (see Chapters 2 & 3), Tita Monica underlined how she struggled in nursing college. Whilst the pursuit of nursing differentiated Tita Monica from her siblings, her narration shared with those of her siblings an emphasis on prevailing over difficulties. ‘It was only the first semester,’ she recalled, ‘but I already wanted to quit.’ The college wanted to establish its reputation in the field of nursing, hence it was quite strict and demanding on its students. Worried about the possibility of not meeting the college’s retention requirements, Tita Monica studied hard throughout her college career. Later, I would learn from Tita Amy that Tita Monica also had to face household obligations, including helping with chores and looking after one of her nephews (Tita Mila’s son; Tita Mila at that time was preoccupied with her poultry business).

It was not just academic pressures and family obligations, however, that Tita Monica had to contend with. As with her siblings, a large part of her difficulties had to do with money. She scrimped on her expenses. Instead of going home during extended breaks, she stayed on campus; in the morning, she brought with her all her books, thick and heavy. As her older siblings did before her, Tita Monica opted to bring packed lunch (usually the unglamorous combination of rice and fried or dried fish, I was told) on most days even if, in order to avoid being embarrassed before her friends, it meant eating behind the college gym’s bleachers, where she could not be easily seen. Whenever she and her friends went to the cinema, so that she could buy a ticket, she would content herself with menthol candies instead of buying the more expensive popcorn or crisps.

In portraying how she triumphed over various obstacles whilst pursuing a nursing degree, Tita Monica made clear how she did not immediately realise her avowed goal of migrating and moving up. After graduating from college, she went to Manila in search of a job. She eventually found one at a state-run orthopaedic hospital. Working for a state-run hospital then meant, as it did during my fieldwork, receiving a low salary, making do with limited equipment and resources, and almost always being overworked due to the volume of patients.

It was not the ideal situation, and Tita Monica planned on migrating to the US. To do this, however, she had to undergo a certification process administered by the US Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Students (CGFNS), which, since 1978, had been required of all prospective nurse immigrants before they could be issued a visa (see Choy 2003: chap. 6). Unlike some of her college batch mates, Tita Monica did not enrol in a revision course. With no money and time to spare, she revised on her own less than a month before the examination, which she failed.

One by one, her colleagues at the orthopaedic hospital left for jobs overseas, leaving Tita Monica to feel that she was falling by the wayside. 'I became desperate. I told myself, I'll also work abroad,' she confided to me. She bided her time. After waiting for another year to gain the requisite two years of hospital experience, she applied for a job in Saudi Arabia. In 1983, Tita Monica left the Philippines to start her new job.

During our New Year's Day conversation, Tita Monica glossed over her experiences in Saudi, but during our earlier conversations in the hospital, she recounted stories about that part of her life. As with her job in Manila, she did not stay long in Saudi. The restrictions imposed on women proved to be rather unappealing to her. Vividly, she recalled how she and her fellow Filipina nurses were, one day, chased in the market by a *muttawa* (a member of the religious police) for failing to wear a veil. She likewise disliked how women were segregated from men, and had to be accompanied by a male guardian when going to public places. Such restrictions were in stark contrast with the absence of heavily policed borders between men and women in the Philippines (see Blanc-Szanton 1990).

'I had no extracurricular activities,' was how Tita Monica described her situation in Saudi. She spent most of her time at work and at the living quarters provided by their employer. Strikingly reminiscent of her childhood years in Santa Rosa, when other older kin restrained her and her siblings' mobility (see Chapter 2), I imagine that her years in Saudi must have been difficult for her. After all, she had already unfettered herself when she went to Manila for work. Moreover, the restrictions that she experienced in Saudi seem ironic given the spirit of freedom evoked by migration, as signalled her euphemistic use of '*makalabas*' to mean 'to go

abroad.’ This word, which literally means ‘to go outside,’ is also used to mean emancipation from incarceration or confinement, as well as to migrate.

The restrictions on female mobility meant, however, that Tita Monica had time to study for the CGFNS. She borrowed a popular revision book from her best friend, for, she claimed, she could not afford to buy one on her own. In August of 1986, Tita Monica went home to Santa Rosa to enrol in a review course for her examination, which she took six weeks later, before returning to Saudi to finish the remainder of her contract. This time, she passed. The following year, in May, she went home to process her application papers for the US. Aware that no one else in the family would be able to help her with her application expenses (including placement fee and airfare), she had to save US\$ 2,000 from her salary.

At this point, Tita Monica quietly suggested that her timing was right, and that luck was possibly on her side, just as when she was admitted to nursing college. She pointed out that the processing of her application coincided with a recruitment drive by hospitals in New York. Not only was her placement fee waived, but her payment for the CGFNS revision course was also refunded.

Thus, in January 1988, she finally achieved her dream of migrating to the United States. After several years, she also obtained the much desired (but in the case of many, elusive) American citizenship. During my fieldwork, after almost three decades of working in New York, she was already contemplating retirement and her eventual return to Santa Rosa. She was also considering applying for Filipino dual citizenship, mainly to circumvent a Philippine constitutional provision prohibiting foreigners from owning land, an issue that became more pressing for her given Lola Ising’s death and the intended sale of the family’s farmland (see Chapter 1).

What emerges thus far from Tita Monica’s narration of her journey to America is a picture of migration and social mobility as paths full of potholes, barriers, and detours. In a way paths like the one she took characterise the ascent to middle-classness in the Philippines, and perhaps elsewhere. Whilst aspirations may be clear and widely shared, their realisation is uncertain, and the obstacles one encounters and overcomes along one’s path mark the passage of time. Furthermore, surprises may lie on one’s path: concealed parts where the path suddenly forks, where

blockages compel one to take a detour, or, more positively, where potholes and barriers unexpectedly disappear.

Personal striving and fortitude were certainly deemed by Tita Monica as crucial to her achievements. However, by describing her journey in part through notions of luck, right timing, and coincidence, she also foregrounded how she experienced the pursuit of social and geographical mobility as subject to contingencies of various kinds, including those shaped by nursing colleges, state institutions, recruitment agencies, and employers. As Aguilar (1999) has demonstrated, migration for Filipinos is often understood as the pursuit of luck, and being able to migrate is itself a kind of good fortune. In his analysis, contemporary labour migration is a secular form of pilgrimage that ideally eventuates in the successful return of the migrant. Yet, as has been pointed out, fortune, luck, and other similar ideas invite attention to how human economies and relations are intertwined with material and non-human entities, including spirits and gods (da Col 2012; da Col & Humphrey 2012). Here I must point out that although Tita Monica did not explicitly raise the issue of religion, her narrative emphasis on being resolute amidst difficulties hinted at the religious underpinnings of journeys of mobility. To recall, in Chapter 2, I discussed how notions of redemption, suffering, and perseverance were inflected by Catholic ideas. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 6, for several families in Santa Rosa, social mobility was interwoven with religious devotions and exchanges with the divine.

Managing disappointments

In portraying her route as difficult and circuitous, Tita Monica also differentiated herself from her sibling's children, notwithstanding similarities in their professions. I have already described how her reminiscence was triggered by Patrick's return to Manila, a move interpreted as irresponsible by Tita Monica. Whilst Patrick's case may seem extreme in comparison with his cousins who did finish university and were working overseas as health professionals, it was also the case that Tita Monica compared her experience with those of Patrick's migrant cousins.

As I have indicated, a good number of the Mahilway grandchildren went on to pursue health-related professions overseas. Part of this generational shift was directly related to Tita Monica's pursuit of a nursing career in the US: it was no longer far-fetched for them to conceive of a career in healthcare overseas—if their aunt could do it, so could they. Unlike Tita Monica, who had to assert her will versus those of her older siblings, the succeeding generation did not have to justify the pursuit of health-related careers.

In fact, Tita Monica actively tried to steer her siblings' children towards nursing and other allied professions. By pursuing these professions, she would encourage them, it would be easier in the future to find employment outside of the Philippines. The financial help she extended also mattered, as it enabled some of her nieces and nephews to pay for their education. Although, to the best of my knowledge, Tita Monica and her siblings did not compel anyone from the descending generation to become a health professional, Tita Monica's own trajectory, as well as the financial support she extended certainly made it easier for several of her siblings' children to follow her lead.

Given the constriction of opportunities for migration of nurses in the mid- and late 2000s, the assistance that Tita Monica extended to several her siblings' children was particularly valuable. Beyond helping send them to university, she also covered part of their expenses for the Philippine and American licensure examinations (including review lessons and examination fees), as well as placement and travel costs. She also provided knowledge about and advice pertaining to the migration process, such as proper procedures and available opportunities.

Indeed, for Tita Monica, a key difference between herself and her nieces and nephews was that she did not have kin to help her when she embarked on her migration journey. Especially regarding those who followed her to the US, Tita Monica emphasised that no family member helped her settle in when she first arrived in New York. Instead, she had to rely on friends and former colleagues who migrated ahead of her. This meant an additional pressure to pass the American licensure examinations (first as a practical nurse, then as a registered nurse) and to immediately find a job; she did not want her friendships to be strained by relying on them for an extended period. Moreover, unlike during the time of my fieldwork, when Filipinos

could take their American licensure examinations in the Philippines, Tita Monica had to take hers in New York. She had to pass her examinations at the first sitting, or else risk losing her job and going back to the Philippines, for her visa was tied to a nursing job in the hospital that recruited her.

The various forms of help that Tita Monica gave to her nieces and nephews conformed to the expectation of solidarity amongst siblings, which, as I discussed in the Introduction, encompasses siblings' children (see also Chapter 7). In other words, by narrating how she helped her nieces and nephews, not only did she highlight generational and professional distinctions, she also implicitly portrayed herself as a virtuous sibling and aunt. Tita Monica may thus be contrasted with her older sisters Tita Mila and Tita Dolor. To recall, in Chapter 2 we saw how Tita Mila's decision to get married despite opposition from her family effectively liberated her from the duty of helping send her younger siblings to university. In Chapter 3, we saw how Tita Dolor did not support her siblings and their children despite an outstanding and successful career as a schoolteacher, thus jeopardising her own wellbeing (and her sister Tita Amy's; see Chapter 6) in her old age given her unmarried status.

Seen in this light, the support that Tita Monica extended to her nephews and nieces, although it conformed to the expectation of sibling solidarity, also entailed a reversal of roles amongst siblings. Given the importance of age and generation, help is often expected to flow downwards, such as from older to younger siblings, and not the reverse. As I will show in the next section, this would have repercussions in terms of authority within the family.

Here I should add that Tita Monica herself also, for a long time, remained unmarried. As such, she was considered as part of the family's 'lineage' of unmarried men and women (see Chapter 3). It was only when she was 45 that she got married to Tito Danny, a fellow Filipino migrant she met in New York. However, going through my notes, I am struck by a singular fact: that not once did Tita Monica talk about the circumstances surrounding her marriage. Like the stories about the construction of the house and the ensuing conflict with her sister Tita Olive, which I discuss below, I only learnt about her marriage from some of her siblings and their children—often in fragments and by way of indirect accounts.

‘She enjoyed her life as a single woman,’ was an explanation that I heard several times. If it not had been for a serious illness, I was told, she would not have married Tito Danny, who had been courting her for a decade. ‘Maybe she realised that she needed someone to depend on,’ one of her siblings speculated.

It may have been the case that Tita Monica enjoyed being single in New York City. Yet, it was also true that remaining unmarried was favourable to her family. By the time she got married, Tita Monica had been working in New York for 18 years. As an unmarried woman for most of her sojourn, Tita Monica was expected to help members of her family. As other scholars have discussed more fully, unmarried female migrants tend to face more expectations from their family compared with their male and married female counterparts (Aguilar *et al.* 2009: chap. 4; Tacoli 1996; 1999).

Abiding by such expectations, however, was not automatic; neither did it occur at the very start of her migration journey. ‘I used not to send money back home,’ she confided to me. She continued: ‘when I started working abroad, even in the US, I kept all my salary to myself. My mother didn’t ask for any.’ Then, things changed, at first unremarkably. Tita Monica, in fact, only vaguely remembered the first time she sent money back home: there was an occasion and Lola Ising asked for some money, a request that Tita Monica complied with. Over time, however, one request led to another. ‘Would you believe it,’ she asked me, ‘that when I started sending money, ah, there was no stopping it.’

The assistance that Tita Monica extended to her nieces and nephews thus formed part of her obligations as an unmarried daughter, sibling, and aunt. She likewise sent a monthly allowance for Lola Ising (the only one amongst the siblings to do so, although Tita Amy attended to their mother’s everyday needs; see Chapter 6), and paid the utility bills for the main house. Like many other overseas Filipinos, she regularly sent boxes full of groceries, clothes, and other gifts for family members. Such boxes, it has been argued, enable overseas Filipinos to sustain kinship and other ties transnationally, whilst providing left-behind kin a taste of the foreign, thus affirming a positive view of migration (see, amongst others, Blanc 1996; Liebelt 2015; Rafael 1997). Most visibly, with some help from Tita Dolor who was then teaching in

New York, she paid for the construction of the family's new main house, and its renovation after several years.

Tita Monica, however, indicated that she tried to manage her family's expectations. Education, she stressed, was her priority. She only granted requests pertaining to the studies of her siblings' children, and declined requests for gadgets, stylish clothes and shoes, and other items she considered inessential. She also made it a point to support at least one of each of her sibling's children, so that they could, in turn, help their own siblings.

It was particularly clear, however, that acts of giving and supporting were shot through with the possibility of abuse and disappointment. Tita Monica spoke of this possibility by narrating a random encounter at the supermarket. When she and Tita Amy went to the supermarket to buy groceries for the New Year's Eve celebration, the man ahead of them in the queue was noticeably too well dressed to be a local resident. They suspected that he was from abroad, something they confirmed when, as the man took out a Louis Vuitton wallet when he was about to pay for two carts of groceries, they saw that his credit card was issued by a US bank.

The two sisters engaged the man in a conversation. He told them that along with shopping for clothes, shoes, and appliances, buying groceries is something that he usually does (and which his relatives expect him to do) whenever he visits from the US. For this reason, he almost always exceeds his credit card limit every time he goes home to Iloilo. This time, however, his mother was in the hospital. He had no one else to turn to, as his siblings were not well off. Meanwhile, the nephews and nieces that he helped send to university did not finish their studies. Only a few had maintained communication with him. Almost boastfully, Tita Amy told the man that Tita Monica fared better, as almost all the nieces and nephews that she helped send to university did graduate; they too were in contact and may be depended on to help, as they did during Lola Ising's confinement (see below).

I interrupted Tita Monica's narration and asked if, just as the man they met in the supermarket experienced, there have been disappointments on her part regarding the nieces and nephews she supported. With slight reluctance, she mentioned the name of Karen, Tita Mila's daughter, and who Tita Monica helped send to medical school. Although Karen had passed the medical licensure

examination, she decided to retrain as a nurse and follow her aunt to the US. She had no money to establish her own practice, and her only other viable option was, said her mother, to take up an extremely underpaid and overworked position at a state-run hospital.

When Karen migrated to New York, she relied on Tita Monica initially to cover the cost of her airfare. She also lived with her aunt whilst preparing for her US licensure examinations. Moreover, unlike Tita Monica who, as I mentioned, practically had no leeway when it came to taking her licensure examinations, Karen delayed taking hers. 'Oh, I'm not yet ready,' Tita Monica recalled Karen telling her many times. When Karen eventually took and passed her examinations, Tita Monica helped her find a job at a local hospital.

Without giving details, Tita Monica pointed out that despite this history of extending help, her niece had not been in touch with her—not even an occasional telephone call or text message. 'I heard from others,' she said as if to emphasise the distance that has emerged between her and Karen, 'that she's already in Florida.'

Almost a year later, during my return visit, I learnt from some of Tita Monica's other kin that after Karen started working, she moved out of her aunt's flat without seeking her aunt's blessing. Karen was supposedly hiding from a colleague who had been harassing and stalking her, and who she suspected of bewitching her due to professional jealousy. Apparently, having been trained as a doctor caused Karen to feel confident in criticising her colleagues, thus provoking their ire. Whilst this may have been a valid reason for Karen to move to another residence, Tita Monica, I was told, felt aggrieved that Karen did not even bother to inform her beforehand. The lack of communication after Karen moved out compounded Tita Monica's grievance. I was likewise told that in moving to Florida, Karen also set in motion a lengthy, demanding, and expensive plan to practise medicine in the US (see Sopher 2014).

I met Karen only once, during the early days of my fieldwork, when she was in Santa Rosa for a short holiday. As I had yet no idea about the events that transpired in New York, I did not seek to elicit her own views on her aunt's resentment. Thus, following Leinaweaver (2013), who notes how expressions of ingratitude may index discrepancies in expectations regarding kinship and care

obligations, especially amidst social change and inequalities, it could have been the case that whilst Karen may have wanted to express gratitude to her aunt, work and labour market conditions may have constrained her ability to do so. Her desire to practise medicine may have also been a factor. More radically, it could have been the case that understandings of gratitude had become unsettled under migratory conditions. Indeed, at least as far as Tita Monica was concerned, her experience with Karen allowed her to recalibrate her relations with the rest of the family. ‘If there’s anything I’ve learned,’ she said, ‘it’s that you shouldn’t expect so you won’t be disappointed.’

Deciding life and death

The reversal of roles and hierarchies amongst the siblings enabled by Tita Monica’s migration to the US entailed shifts not only in flows of resources and assistance, but also authority within the family, particularly during moments of difficulty. In enabling upward mobility, migration also allowed Tita Monica to achieve what Cole (2014: S88) has described amongst her Malagasy interlocutors (who, just like the Ilonggos, emphasised siblingship) as having the ‘first word,’ or the ‘privilege of shaping family decisions before others have their say.’ Thus, in Chapter 1, we witnessed how Tita Monica was a driving force behind the planned sale of the family’s farmland. Prior to that issue, however, Tita Monica’s precedence over her siblings became particularly visible in relation to Lola Ising’s illness and death, where her financial capability, combined with her familiarity with biomedical regimes of care, enabled her to have the ‘first word.’

I first met Tita Monica in the hospital, in the corridor of the ICU section. It was my first time visiting Lola Ising, five days after she was admitted to the hospital. Along with Tita Angeles, Tita Mila, and Isa (Tita Mila’s youngest daughter), I was waiting for the doors to Lola Ising’s room to open. It was already visiting hour, yet the doors remained shut as the nurse was still feeding Lola Ising. As we waited, Tita Monica and her husband, Tito Danny, arrived. Although the two had arrived in Manila the previous night, they had to spend the night in the airport whilst waiting

for their connecting flight to Iloilo. After dropping off their luggage and taking a shower at the family's house in Santa Rosa, they rushed to the hospital.

After about ten minutes, the nurse ushered us into the room. Lola Ising lay unconscious on the bed. Without saying a word, Tita Monica immediately examined her mother's monitor, scrutinising every detail. Soon, she noticed the absence of a reading for blood oxygen saturation. A nurse was promptly summoned, and Tita Monica calmly explained the situation and requested for an oximeter to be placed on her mother's right middle finger.

Tita Monica's arrival came as a relief to her siblings, particularly Tita Amy, who had been attending to Lola Ising in the hospital. Because of Tita Monica's professional background, she was expected to—and did—interact with the physicians and nurses. She helped the family understand Lola Ising's condition by explaining doctors' prognoses and recommendations. Although she had been constantly conferring via mobile phone calls with the physicians before she left New York, her presence in Iloilo meant that she took on a more active role. I recall witnessing later that afternoon how Tita Monica told her siblings who were around to be present during their meeting the following day. The physicians had asked Tita Monica for a directive on what to do should Lola Ising suffer another cardiac arrest. According to Tita Monica, the doctors did not want to give the family false hopes, given Lola Ising's age and condition. Tita Monica conveyed to her siblings her desire that the family speak in one voice when they meet with the physicians the following day.

In helping her siblings come to terms with their mother's medical condition, Tita Monica relied on her nephews and nieces—especially her fellow health professionals. When we left the hospital that afternoon, for example, we ran into Jessica, Tita Mila's daughter who used to work as a hospital nurse in the Middle East. By that time, Tita Mila and Isa had already gone home to Santa Rosa. Aside from giving Jessica an update on Lola Ising's condition, Tita Monica also instructed her on what to tell her mother regarding the following day's meeting.

When it came to medical matters, there was a general sense in which Tita Monica's older siblings deferred to her. When Lola Ising had to undergo a procedure so she could be weaned from the ventilator, thus decreasing the probability that she would contract an infection, I witnessed Tita Monica explain the procedure to

everyone present, including Tita Dolor, a cousin, and a sister-in-law. Quite striking was how Tita Dolor—normally opinionated and feisty (see Chapter 3)—remained quiet the whole time. She did not utter a word, not even when Tita Monica was finished speaking. She simply looked at her sister.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Lola Ising was confined for a total of 51 days—slightly more than a month in the ICU, and the rest, in a private suite. Tita Monica bore the burden of paying for the bulk of Lola Ising's hospital expenses, and had to take out a loan from her retirement fund. Amongst the siblings, she was the only one who had both the means and willingness to do so. As her oldest sister Tita Mila intimated to me, 'we [she and the other siblings] can't afford it (*waay man kami kasarang*).' When the siblings, for instance, decided that they all should contribute 50,000 pesos (approx. £715) each, Tita Mila herself had to borrow from a local money lending company; in the end, she only managed to contribute 45,000 pesos (approx. £643) as she also had medical expenses of her own.

Tita Monica also received financial help from fellow migrant health professionals in the family. Several of her nephews and nieces came home, and it was a reunion of sorts for the cousins. Whenever they had the time, they engaged in activities together, such as going to the mall or the movies, and driving around the city. Most of the time, however, the cousins were in the hospital, where they took turns attending to their grandmother. They also helped pay for some of the expenses. When the neurologist prescribed an expensive medicine, which cost 6,000 pesos (approx. £86) per day, the cousins all wanted to pay for it. Tita Monica had to step in and assign a day for each of them. Tita Amy took her nieces' and nephews' eagerness as a consolation. 'It's so heart-warming,' she told me when I visited her at their house. Whilst Lola Ising's sudden illness was difficult for everyone, the fact that Lola's grandchildren were willing to help lightened things up a bit for Tita Amy and her siblings.

Three weeks after her arrival, Tita Monica went back to New York as her leave had run out. Her nephews and nieces who came home to care for their grandmother had left days earlier. By this time, Lola Ising was no longer in a coma, but was still in the ICU. Having responded well to the medicine that her neurologist prescribed, she was now able to move—with difficulty—her arms. She was also now

able to respond to simple questions and commands. When Tita Monica left Iloilo, the primary responsibility of looking after Lola Ising and coordinating with the doctors and the nurses shifted back to Tita Amy, although as before, Tita Monica would call several times a day to monitor their mother's condition. I will return to Tita Amy's side of the story in Chapter 6, but here I simply note that the responsibility of attending to Lola Ising in the hospital—whilst in some ways a continuation of her everyday responsibilities, was a source of considerable anxiety for Tita Amy.

Lola Ising was eventually transferred to a private room. The doctors in fact recommended that she be brought home to avoid contracting a hospital-acquired infection. Tita Amy, having no training in nursing or medicine, did not want their mother to be brought home until they could find private nurses to care for her. The doctors' fears turned to reality, however, and Lola Ising's health deteriorated. I saw her alive for the last time on a Sunday late afternoon, when I visited her and the family. Her breathing was laboured. Two days later, she passed away.

I came to know about Lola Ising's death through Tita Monica's Facebook. Whilst I was having lunch in one of Iloilo's malls, I saw on my feed that Tita Monica's friends were offering her their condolences over her mother's death. Weeks later, I would learn that on the morning of Lola Ising's death, Tita Monica, as she regularly did, called the hospital to ask for an update. The nurse informed her that Lola Ising had not woken up for some time, and had not been responding to stimuli. Immediately, Tita Monica called Tita Amy and asked her and their other siblings in Santa Rosa to go to the hospital. It was their last opportunity to see their mother alive, Tita Monica told her sister.

For several days after Lola Ising's death, the date of her interment remained unset, as the family decided to wait for Tita Monica to arrive from New York before finalising details of the funeral. In the meantime, Lola Ising's remains were brought home to Santa Rosa for the wake: a neighbour and distant relative led the prayers for the dead every night; masses were officiated; a priest from the nearby parish church, along with sacristans and a small choir, came almost every night. Each night, after the mass and the prayers for the dead, the Mahilways served dinner to all those present, with Tita Amy and her oldest son in charge of preparing the food. As is

usual in the Philippines, neighbours, kin, and friends attended the wake at night, which often extended until the early hours of the next day.

It was not just the date of the funeral, however, that was set in accordance with Tita Monica's preferences and circumstances. Whilst Tita Monica was still in New York, Tita Amy, who was coordinating the preparations in Iloilo, consulted her over the telephone, not least because Tita Monica shouldered most of the expenses. For example, the decision to get an expensive white metal casket, rather than a less expensive one, was Tita Monica's. My memory of this scene is vague, but I remember overhearing Tita Monica say that she did not want their neighbours, friends, and relatives to think that Lola Ising was not given the best, despite having a daughter in the US.

The wake was already on its fourth night when Tita Monica arrived. Her brother Tito Benjie fetched her from the airport and brought her straight to the wake, and when she arrived, a mass for Lola Ising was on-going. It was briefly interrupted when Tita Monica approached her mother's coffin in tears. Aside from the funeral itself, this was the only other time when I saw her in such emotion. She was always calm and collected.

Tita Monica then took on the role of entertaining guests at the wake, which lasted for another week. She likewise supervised the serving of food to guests, paying meticulous attention to the paper and plastic plates, cups, cutlery, and napkins used—some of which she brought from the US. During the day, she would go for a few hours to the city to buy food and supplies from the mall, or to transact with the funeral home and the cemetery office.

After the funeral, Tita Monica stayed in Santa Rosa for two more weeks. She spent this time with her siblings, particularly Tita Amy, a few cousins, and some nephews and nieces. As is traditionally done in Santa Rosa, Tita Monica and family members who were in the village at that time went to the beach three days after the funeral—supposedly to wash away the presence of death. Tita Monica paid for the excursion. She likewise brought the family to a nearby town to see the Christmas lights. During Christmas and New Year's Day, she purchased the groceries, cakes, and fireworks that were used in the family's celebrations. The excursion and the holiday celebrations considerably lightened up the family's mood. In this way, Tita

Monica's role in steering the family extended to setting in motion the process of grieving and coming to terms with the death of Lola Ising.

'This house needs to be repaired'

I have indicated in various places in this chapter that certain aspects of Tita Monica's biography were inaccessible to me, or at best, only partially visible. This opaqueness was most pronounced when it came to Tita Monica's conflict with her sister, Tita Olive. I came to know of this conflict rather unexpectedly, through a conversation about the family's main house.

It was still New Year's Day, and we had just had our lunch. It was sweltering inside the main house, so I stepped out onto the porch. Tita Amy was seated on Lola Ising's old rocking chair. I sat on the bamboo bench beside her and fanned myself to dispel the heat. Almost automatically, I took out my mobile phone, and checked for messages.

'This house needs to be repaired,' Tita Amy said, breaking the silence. I stopped fiddling with my phone and looked at her quizzically. 'It's going to be a big expense. If only your Lola Ising were not hospitalised,' she continued, whilst looking at the rusty and loose gutter. A few days before, the whole of the porch was flooded during a heavy downpour.

By Tita Amy's account, the house was constructed in 1990, when both Tita Dolor and Tita Monica were working in New York. Although Tita Dolor originally promised to shoulder half of the house's cost, Tita Monica ended up paying for the bulk of the expenses. At that time, it cost about a million pesos to construct the house. Resonating with other migrants from the Philippines and elsewhere, the construction of a house was a way for Tita Monica both to display and validate one's success abroad and to affirm one's ties with non-migrant family members (see Aguilar 2009; Leinaweaver 2009; P. Thomas 1998).

At the time of its construction, the Mahilways' main house was one of the bigger and more modern houses in Santa Rosa. In 2014, although several newer houses comparable in size or even bigger had been built in the village, and even if it

had accumulated visible signs of age, the Mahilways' house continued to have the distinction of being one of the better abodes in the village. Village officials, for instance, would periodically 'borrow' the house for meetings and other events.

From the outside, the house's concrete structure and the pillars that adorned it in various parts (and which supported the roof) lent it solidity. Unlike many of the houses in Santa Rosa, particularly those owned by informal settlers, the walls of the Mahilways' house had undergone finishing and were painted in a bright colour. The roof—because it extended well beyond the walls of the house to encompass the porch and a portion of the adjoining driveway and garden—made the house look bigger. Indeed, a story that was often told about the house was how visible it (or more precisely, the roof) was on Google Maps and Earth. Another was how Tita Amy's husband, when he was still active in the military, easily identified the house's roof when he joined a helicopter reconnaissance that flew over the village.

The interiors, too, set the house apart from most of the other abodes in the village. During my fieldwork, upon entering the house through the porch, visitors were greeted by a staircase leading to the first floor. As I described in Chapter 2, enlarged and framed pictures of Lola Ising and her children were hung on the staircase's wall and that of the foyer on the first floor. On the first floor were two rooms, one used for some time by Tita Amy and her husband Tito Ruel, and the other allocated to a maternal cousin who, in her childhood, was taken in by Lola Ising. There was also a water closet, and a foyer where sleeping mats were usually unfurled for visiting relatives and guests during occasions, such as during Lola Ising's wake and funeral.

On the ground floor, there were three rooms, each with its own shower and toilet: Lola Ising's, Tita Monica's, and Tita Dolor's. There too was a spacious area, where upholstered wooden seats for receiving guests were placed at one end, and a dining set on the other. Against the wall, in the centre of this area, was a small and enclosed space with a bookcase that contained an encyclopaedia set, a few of Tita Dolor's old teaching books, and some of the dolls collected by Tita Monica. A framed picture of New York City's evening skyline was prominently displayed beside the bookcase. A counter separated the dining area from the kitchen, at the back of which was a small space for doing the laundry and washing the dishes. Beside the

kitchen was a separate water closet meant for the use of guests. As with the house's external walls, the inside walls had had finishing and painting. The floor was tiled using marble and ceramic. Varnished pieces of wood (from a tree that used to grow outside the house) were used as wall accents throughout the house.

In 1997, the house was renovated after Lola Ising requested that the outdoor dining area be covered with roof, as it was almost impossible to use it both during the hot days of summer and the wet days of the monsoon season. Yet, Tita Monica's sister Tita Olive, who managed the renovation, opted for an overhaul of the whole house. She sought the help of a distant relative who was an unlicensed architect. The renovation dragged on and its cost ran into the millions. Despite this, the outcome was not good. Tita Amy enumerated the flaws of the renovation: the ventilation was now poorer, hence it tended to feel hotter than usual inside the house, especially during summer; the veranda always flooded every time it rained; some of the windows inside the house now opened to a hideous concrete wall.

Given the renovation's outcome, Tita Amy raised the possibility that her sister Tita Olive might have conspired with the architect. 'I don't know if they connived with each other,' she said. 'But you see,' she continued, 'the way they renovated the house, it was like trial and error.' 'They were even laughing about what happened to the house!' she added, before concluding that 'they played with your Tita Monica's money!'

Tita Olive, who lived in another part of Molo, explicitly told Tita Amy not to meddle with the renovation project, even if she lived in the house. At that time, Tita Amy and Tita Dolor were the only ones amongst the siblings living in Santa Rosa; Tita Amy looked after Lola Ising (see Chapter 6). Annoyed, Tita Amy decided to go on a holiday in Manila. 'Where are you going? Why are you abandoning the house?', Tita Amy recalled her sister asking her, and to which she retorted, 'didn't you say I shouldn't care about it?'

As this part of the conversation unfolded, Tita Amy's face registered a startled expression. She was, perhaps, taken aback that she had revealed this information to me. I was unsure what to make of the conversation, and whether to encourage Tita Amy to continue with her narration or not. From the rocking chair, she peered inside

the house to see if anyone was within hearing distance. Seeing that no one was nearby, she continued with her story.

Tita Amy revealed that during the time of the house's renovation, Tita Monica was particularly close with Tita Olive. Their closeness was evident, I learnt, how every time she would come home from New York, she would go straight to Tita Olive's house and sleep there for a night. It would only be the following day when Tita Monica would head to Santa Rosa. On many occasions, Lola Ising and Tita Monica's other siblings would not know that Tita Monica would be arriving.

It was through Tita Olive that Tita Monica sent money to the family in Santa Rosa. The boxes of gifts and groceries that Tita Monica periodically sent to Iloilo were also coursed through Tita Olive. Before the contents of the boxes could be distributed amongst Tita Monica's siblings and their children, Tita Olive and her family would select from the lot items that they liked. Even items earmarked for another person were not exempt. Tito Luis, Tita Olive's husband, I was told, was particularly fond of asking for items earmarked to his siblings-in-law or their spouses and children. Mere '*wisik-wisik*' (sprinkling) was how Tita Amy described the items that did reach them in Santa Rosa. The irony did not escape Tita Amy: 'the one who was relatively well off was the one who took advantage of her other siblings.' Here, Tita Amy alluded to how Tita Olive had a well-paying career in a telecommunications company whilst her husband was a scion of a land-holding family in Iloilo.

The two sisters' closeness was broken in 2006, just before Tita Monica's marriage to Tito Danny. Tito Luis opposed the marriage, and he and Tita Olive sought to convince other family members to dissuade Tita Monica. The objection was partly on religious grounds: Tito Danny belonged to the *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ, a Philippine Evangelical Church) (see Reed 2001), whilst Tito Luis and his in-laws were practising Catholics. Moreover, Tito Luis expressed doubts about Tito Danny's sincerity and suggested the possibility that his sister-in-law's future husband was only motivated by money. Tita Amy disputed this, as she had been to Tito Danny's family's place in Southern Luzon. It was clear to her that Tito Danny's family was affluent as it owned farmlands and sprawling fishponds.

Tita Amy speculated that Tito Luis's and Tita Olive's objections to Tita Monica's marriage were ultimately self-serving, as it would have meant that the flow of money and gifts that were relayed through them would ebb. Marriage, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, was recognised by my Ilonggo friends as a means for extricating one's self from familial obligations. Marrying, in this sense, is an act of 'cutting the network' (Strathern 1996) of kinship duties, or at the very least, limiting them.

Despite the objections, Tita Monica proceeded with her marriage to Tito Danny. Tito Luis, in turn, vowed never again to set foot in the Mahilways' compound in Santa Rosa. He also forbade his wife and children from visiting the compound. This turn of events compelled Lola Ising to surreptitiously go to Tita Olive's every now and then, riding a *trisikad* and crossing a busy highway along the way. Tita Amy resented the situation. 'What if,' she asked, 'something happened to your grandmother? They didn't even bother to have the old woman collected and dropped off. To think that they have cars!' Moreover, when Tita Olive and Tito Luis emigrated in late 2014, they did not personally say goodbye to Lola Ising, and only phoned her when they were already in the US.

In recounting the circumstances surrounding the house and Tita Monica's marriage, Tita Amy pointed out that Tita Olive failed to restrain Tito Luis. It was not, to begin with, his place to interfere in Tita Monica's decision to marry as he was merely an in-law (*tapik*, literally 'attached to'). It was Tita Olive's role, in Tita Amy's view, to restrain her husband, particularly when it came to matters involving her siblings; her failure to do so endangered her ties with Tita Monica and their other siblings.

As I discuss elsewhere in the thesis, the people I met in Santa Rosa expected women, much more than their brothers, to attend and give importance to their natal families even after marriage (see especially Chapters 5 & 6). Seen especially in the light of her history of closeness with Tita Monica, Tita Olive's failure to restrain her husband, as well as the embezzlement of house renovation funds that supposedly occurred caused irreparable damage to her relationship with her sister. Here, both stealing and complete deference to one's spouse had lethal consequences for ties of siblingship: whilst the former goes against expectations of sharing and solidarity

amongst siblings (see Lambek 2011), the latter is tantamount to displacing siblingship in favour of marriage, whereas the prevailing ideal in the Philippines and island Southeast Asia is that ties between affines over time become like ties between siblings (Cannell 1999; Carsten 1997).

When Lola Ising died, Tita Olive and Tito Luis came home to Iloilo, but only Tita Olive went to the wake and the funeral. Accompanied by her son and Tito Luis's sister, Tita Olive arrived in Santa Rosa on the night that Lola Ising's remains were brought home from the mortuary. Apart from this instance and the actual day of the funeral, Tita Olive came to the wake only two or three more times. They also had their own prayers for the dead after the funeral (see Chapter 7). During those instances when she was in their house in Santa Rosa, Tita Olive did not speak with Tita Monica.

Presumably because of the way in which her conflict with Tita Olive was written into the very house that was meant to embody her efforts overseas, Tita Monica mentioned several times when she was in Santa Rosa that when she retires, she intended to build a small house for herself and Tito Danny, and that she wants to build it next to Tita Amy's house, with the stipulation that there should be no fence between the two houses. The smaller size was justified a few times by Tita Monica in terms of looking forward to becoming old—a bigger house is more difficult to maintain, especially if those who reside in it are already aged. On other occasions, this preference for a smaller house was made in relation to the absence of opportunities for paid overtime work in New York. In the 1990s, when the main house was constructed, Tita Monica had the option of doing as much overtime work as she wanted, as there was a shortage of nurses. Such opportunities for overtime work had since disappeared.

Conclusion

I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the outmigration of nurses and other health professionals from the Philippines is often spoken of in terms of national loss, as in the case of the 'brain drain' discourse, and more recently, of decline, as in

the case of the crash of the nursing boom. Both ways of narrating the health professions emphasise singular movements—out of the country or down to the pits of the labour market. They also portray these movements as discontinuous from broader history.

Seen from the vantage point of my interlocutors, stories about the unfolding of health professions involve long histories and multiple movements. These professions are, to begin with, intimately intertwined with the pursuit of aspirations, some of which may have been gestating for an extended period. Moreover, the outcomes of these aspirations are uncertain and only achieved with much difficulty, and are subject to reversals. These aspirations often invoke freedom from a host of factors: poverty, a previously respectable but now increasingly marginal profession, and the shadows of one's siblings. Yet, the achievement of these aspirations generates new expectations and responsibilities that bind a migrant to her kin. Indeed, these new expectations and responsibilities—and complying with them—appear to make more palatable the generational shifts and discontinuities set in motion by the pursuit of overseas careers in the health professions. Here, usual roles and flows are reversed; a migrant health professional accrues power in the family through the flow of resources that emanate from her. But, as I have discussed, these flows carry with them the possibility of not being reciprocated or even remembered. They may also generate on the part of the migrant health professional feelings of being coerced or being heavily depended upon. At its extreme, these flows may even be redirected in ways inconsistent with the wishes of the migrant and inimical to ties of kinship.

Threading through the stories that I have heard about the pursuit of health professions are multiple images of the work of time. On one level, the passage of time here makes possible what was once impossible to pursue: possibilities are mapped onto birth order and generational location. These possibilities, as I have discussed, have the potential to disrupt norms of siblingship. At the same time, as Tita Monica's case demonstrates, these possibilities enabled her to cultivate intergenerational ties with her nephews and nieces based on shared professional backgrounds, as well as flows of resources.

The realisation of aspirations is partly experienced as resulting from 'good timing': going to nursing college just when an affordable option becomes available;

applying for a nursing job abroad just when a recruitment drive is on-going; studying nursing before the bubble burst. The flip side is that time's passage also foregrounds the fragility of middle class aspirations as these depend on fickle labour markets, which in this case, span across the globe. Professions seen as key to achieving middle-classness and furthering social mobility lose their advantages over time, and those who pursued such professions at the wrong time or are unable to pursue better options are stuck in limbo.

The contrast between dominant narratives of the migration of health professionals from the Philippines and the stories that I have presented in this chapter draws attention to the relationship between the family and broader society. Whilst I have written elsewhere that representations of Filipino migrant workers are underpinned by concerns over gender, family roles, class, and state power (Cruz 2012), here I am struck with how kinship and its associated cycles, rhythms, and other temporalities may refract and even attenuate issues that may otherwise resonate at other scales of society (see Das 2007: 11).

Finally, as I have made clear throughout the chapter, the stories I have presented here bear the marks of gaps, absences, and concealment. For the most part of my fieldwork, the migrant health professionals in the family were away, and I did not have access to them whilst they were working overseas. Some of the stories that I heard were truncated, whilst others were not told to me directly. Stories that emphasise achievement were the easiest to elicit, whilst those that centre on disappointments less so. Those that hint at ruptures of siblingship were most particularly concealed—indeed, whilst there were intergenerational ruptures, it was easier to talk about this in so far as the older person can portray herself as conforming with expectations of what it means to be an older person (for example, helping one's sibling's children). Whilst stories regarding breaches in siblingship may be concealed (especially by those whose specific sibling ties have been impaired), they can also be revealed by other siblings, thus illuminating how siblingship was experienced by my interlocutors as partly about sharing events and life histories with their brothers and sisters and knowing their stories, as well as potentially divulging them to others, relatives and non-relatives and those in-between.



Figure 16. A seaman's first purchase

Chapter 5

In the shadows of success: recalling the absence of men

A vivid picture that emerges from the previous chapters is one where achievements and successes gained against the odds—or what I have called an aesthetic of difficulty—are foregrounded in memories of becoming middle class. Whilst such an aesthetic emphasised the accomplishments of individuals, it also brought to the fore how these successes were obtained in no small part through the efforts and sacrifices of others (such as parents and siblings), and how achievements were often sought for the benefits they accrued to the achieving person, but also to their kin. Indeed, failure to recognise and respond appropriately to the contributions of others, or to share the accruing results of success, could be fatal to relations. Yet, conforming to these expectations, as we have seen, may also lead to breaches in relations. Moreover, whilst this aesthetic principally concerned educational and professional achievements, it drew from Christianity-inflected ideals of suffering and sacrifice, thus bringing to the fore how religious ideals suffused both kinship and the economy.

At the same time, by foregrounding difficulty, narratives of upward social mobility elided advantages and inequalities that were, in fact, consequential for the successful pursuit of middle-classness. In this chapter, I build on this theme of narrative exclusion by considering precisely those that are consigned to the background of such narratives. Here, I am concerned with the shadows cast by the ascent to middle-classness and how these come to inhabit kinship, especially siblingship. What happens when one is not as successful as one's siblings? Or when a sibling's failures threaten to disrupt the successes achieved or aimed at by the others? How might success itself have less than positive consequences for siblingship and other relations?

In considering these shadows, I am confronted too with the ways in which for those I came to know in Santa Rosa, sibling ties were cross-cut by gender relations.

As I discussed in the Introduction, siblingship in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines and many parts of island Southeast Asia is partly thought of in terms of sameness, but also complementary difference. Relative to generation, age, and birth-order, gender tends to be downplayed as an axis of difference. Thus, as we have seen, amongst siblings, age and birth order made a difference, both in terms of latitudes and familial obligations, as well as available educational and professional opportunities. Yet, as the preceding chapters also made clear, the ascent to middle-classness was partly spoken of in terms of women's efforts and sacrifices, and of entry into the women-dominated teaching profession. As the latter case exemplifies, one form that absorption into the post-war non-farm economy took was through gendered professions. However, what has been foregrounded thus far are the experiences and stories of women. What then of men?

By bringing into view stories of and about brothers, I aim in this chapter to shed light on how gender differences emerged in the lives of siblings, and how siblings came to live with these differences. By centring the discussion on brothers, I simultaneously seek to accentuate how their experiences may or may not have diverged from those of their sisters.

Specifically, I sketch and discuss the biographies of three brothers, each one demonstrating a different trajectory in relation to social mobility, sibling ties, and family formation. In discussing these biographies, I heed the insights of anthropologists of the Philippines and Southeast Asia, who emphasise the need to be mindful of the multiple ways in which masculinity and femininity are experienced and described by the people whose lives inform our work, how these descriptions and experiences of gender are entwined with relations of power, and may thus be contested, and indeed liable to transformation over time (Blanc-Szanton 1990; Brenner 1995; 1998; Margold 1995*b*; A. Ong & Peletz 1995).

In the case of the Philippines, the relevance of these insights is inescapable given that the country's colonial and postcolonial history has led to a situation where, as I have noted in the Introduction, bilateral kinship and relative gender symmetry stemming from pre-Spanish times have been inflected with Hispanic kinship and gender norms, as well as American-introduced notions of equality. Rather than treat masculinity and femininity in essential terms, I pay attention in this chapter to the

various ways in which these two, but especially the former, were described, and how these descriptions inflected accounts of social mobility. Part of what emerges here is how particular aspects of masculinity and the pursuit of middle-classness enabled one another.

Finally, I should emphasise that by bringing together siblingship and gender, not only do I demonstrate how the latter inflected the former, but also how the latter cannot be fruitfully understood without locating it within kinship (Carsten 2004: chap. 3). As the biographies demonstrate, relations between brothers and sisters change over the life course, especially with the transition from childhood to youth and adulthood. Moreover, by focussing on brothers, this chapter also describes how relations with affines, especially sisters-in-law, were spoken of by my interlocutors. Here then is a specific instance of how one form of relation is related to another. Although the previous chapters have also touched on how, in Santa Rosa, marriage was, in general, seen as possibly threatening sibling relations, this chapter accentuates how sisters-in-law were at times depicted as distinctly dangerous for brothers' ties with their siblings.

A black sheep

I begin with a discussion of a deceased brother whose life trajectory did not conform with aspirational paths to education, profession, and middle class life, thus making him in several ways a failure. This brother, as well as his daughter and his grandson, did not figure prominently in the family's narratives and its everyday and ritual moments. To the extent that they recounted their deceased brother's biography, the surviving Mahilway siblings often drew on ideals of manhood that froze their brother in time, and which allowed for his failures to be absorbed into family narratives.

He had already been dead for 22 years, yet Tito Nestor continued to cast a shadow on the Mahilways' stories of educational perseverance and success. As the fourth of the siblings, he was the unnamed exception to Lola Ising's claim that all ten of her children finished university; it was his picture that was conspicuously missing from the wall of the family's main house where portraits of his siblings and of a

cousin, all wearing their graduation gowns, were displayed prominently (see Chapter 2).

Whilst certainly not excised from the stories that I heard from the family, Tito Nestor was a figure who did not easily and frequently make an appearance, and was often mentioned in passing in relation to some other character or episode. To learn more about him, I had to coax his siblings. We would, most of the time, circle around various topics until he made an appearance—always brief, never lingering.

Over time, I found that the easiest way to evoke memories of Tito Nestor was by commenting on the stark contrast between his surviving siblings' life trajectory and those of their deceased brother: whilst the latter were brimming with educational and professional achievements, the former was not. Like most of his siblings, Tito Nestor went to San Agustin. He was to study for a chemical engineering degree, but he soon dropped out because he would always be out with his male friends (*barkada*), as most men of his age were expected to do so.¹ Tita Dolor, who was then teaching in Bacolod (see Chapter 3), decided to take him with her so that he would be separated from his *barkada*. In Bacolod, Tito Nestor was enrolled in another university, for a degree in commerce. Being athletic, he became a player for the university's basketball varsity team. However, he was unable to complete his degree, for he started having recurrent abdominal pains, which eventually prompted his return to Santa Rosa.

These pains, I was told, were the beginning of Tito Nestor's battle with what would later culminate with cirrhosis of the liver. According to his siblings, he was a drunkard, and even preferred hard drinks over beer. He was also fond of cutting classes so he could drink with his mates, something that he started doing in high school. He would leave for school wearing a uniform, but instead of attending classes, he and his *barkada* would go to billiard halls, the port area, the beach, or some other favourite haunt. Thus, Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's surprise when, one day, they received a letter from the school principal informing them that their son had not been attending classes.

¹ See Dumont (1993) for a cultural history and ethnographic account of *barkada* in the Central Visayan context. Notably, on the basis of Dumont's article, the word has been recently included in the corpus of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. See D. Salazar (2015).

After he returned to Santa Rosa, Tito Nestor underwent a surgical operation to repair a tear in his stomach lining that was apparently caused by heavy drinking. Following the doctors' advice, he stopped drinking for some time, but he eventually returned to his old ways—always drinking with his *barkada* in the small hut that he built by the beach. With a reputation for being overly generous, to the point of giving away stuff from the pantry, he was very popular amongst his friends and other villagers. In his hut, too, Tito Nestor would bring women, for, as his siblings described him, he was good looking and charming.

What they left out from the story, however, was that their brother fathered a daughter with a neighbour whose mother was a laundrywoman and whose father was a farm worker. I discovered this elision during Lola Ising's wake, when a young man wearing a white maritime college uniform arrived and drew people's attention, including mine. One by one, he pressed against his forehead (*nag-besá*) the hands of Tita Dolor and the other siblings present in the room, receiving only a nod here and there in response. After briefly viewing Lola Ising's coffin, he went out of the house into the yard, and left after several minutes. It was not until the Mahilways' celebration of the feast of San José (see Chapter 6) that I saw him again.

When I asked who the young man was, a cousin of the Mahilways hesitantly whispered to me that he was, in fact, Tito Nestor's grandson through his daughter. The daughter and her son, however, were not mentioned at any point when I elicited information for the family's kinship chart; later, I realised that they were an open secret in the village. In addition, the daughter, I was told, was not given her father's surname. Neither did she inherit anything upon her father's death. Moreover, on the day of Lola Ising's funeral, she and her son were not called to join in the family pictures taken with the coffin, a practice that was *de rigueur* in Santa Rosa, and which demarcated closeness with the deceased.² As these examples indicate, Tito

² At the time of my fieldwork, these pictures would usually be taken in decreasing order of genealogical closeness to the deceased. For instance, if the deceased were married, the first picture to be taken would be with the surviving spouse; the second would be with the children; the third with the grandchildren; etc. Usually the last photographs to be taken are with *parientes* (relatives whose precise genealogical links are unclear), friends, and neighbours or fellow villagers (*kasimaryo*). This practice of taking photographs with the deceased, and other photographic and visual practices within the world of kinship, merit their own investigation, and I intend to write about such practices in the future.

Nestor's daughter and grandson inhabited the margins of the Mahilways' kinship universe. Although not explicitly banished from the family's important events, they were excluded from the family's narratives and remembrances.

I was not told the exact circumstances surrounding Tito Nestor's relationship with the mother of his child. However, based on what I was told, it appears that not long after his daughter was born, Tito Nestor met a woman named Alma, who came from a family of market vendors.³ They cohabited—'lived in' in Philippine English—for a few years (again setting Tito Nestor apart from his siblings), and then later got married. However, they did not have a child of their own. Hence in 1992, when Tito Nestor succumbed to cirrhosis at the age of 46, his widow Alma was left to live with Tito Nestor's unmarried cousin Lucing, in whose house the couple resided. When Lucing died several years after, the house was left in Alma's care.

As someone who did not finish his university degree, was a drunkard, a womaniser, the father of a child borne out of wedlock, and who cohabited with his girlfriend outside the context of marriage, Tito Nestor embodied the opposite of the educated and respectable person that was current in post-war Iloilo, and for which the Mahilways aspired. 'He was the black sheep in the family,' said Tita Amy. At the same time, descriptions of Tito Nestor drew from images of manhood.

During my time in Santa Rosa, frequent and heavy drinking and having children outside marriage, in fact, continued to be thought of as activities of poorer villagers. As has been noted elsewhere in the Philippines (Aquino & Persoon 2011; Evangelista 1973; Fabinyi 2012: 164; Hart 1980), drinking was closely, but not exclusively, associated with men. It was not uncommon to see groups of men, usually unemployed or those who did odd jobs, sitting by the road or the narrow alleys whilst sharing bottles of alcohol, even at nine in the morning. In fact, the image of groups of men drinking by the kerb was one that my friends and acquaintances in Iloilo often had of Santa Rosa and its surrounding areas (see Introduction). Although drinking

³ I refer to Alma without the appropriate kinship term (*tita*) to reflect how the Mahilways never used the term when talking to me about her. Whilst they would usually use an expression like 'your Lola Ising' or 'your Tita Monica,' thus making clear that the person being referred to is my classificatory kin, this never occurred whenever we talked about their deceased sister-in-law. I suspect that this was because they never fully accepted Alma as their affine, an issue that I take up later in this section.

alcohol cut across classes, those with means would usually drink in bars or in the comfort of their homes, but never by the road. There too was the idea that men of lesser means are less likely to control their drinking than their more affluent counterparts.

Meanwhile, across the Philippines, whilst marriage prior to living together and having children is often the norm, this is not completely followed (e.g. Yu & Liu 1980: 53-72). Indeed, cohabitation and having children outside of marriage appears to be more likely amongst the lower than with the upper classes (see Xenos & Kabamalan 2007). Moreover, young men are, in fact, encouraged to be sexually adventurous, even if premarital chastity is encouraged of (middle and upper-class) women (Blanc-Szanton 1990: 350-52; Jocano 1969: 61-62).

I have already mentioned in Chapter 2 that, in some parts of the Philippines, including rural Panay, rice farmer parents with little or no formal education were more likely to send their daughters than their sons to school and college. I have also said that such a view was not explicitly articulated by the people I worked with, although it could very well have been in their minds. What they did say was that, all things being equal, girls were more likely to do well in school as they were more focussed on their studies. Boys, on the other hand, because they are more mobile and spend considerable amounts of time with their *barkada*, are less likely to excel in their studies. Indeed, as noted by others, homosociality has been central to Filipino masculinity, although men with pretension to respectability may deny having a *barkada* precisely because of its connotations of irresponsibility and even violence (Dumont 1993; Margold 1995*b*). As such, if parents had to choose who to send to school or university, female children would have an advantage.

In the limited narrations that I heard, in addition to portraying their brother in specific masculine ways, the Mahilway siblings often linked Tito Nestor's rather casual attitude towards education to the fact that when he was still an infant, he was taken in by their Papá Enso, their father's cousin's husband. Enso did this in the hopes of alleviating his wife Pilar's depression over the death of one of their daughters. This resonates with what has been observed in Iloilo and the Western Visayas and elsewhere in the Philippines and Southeast Asia: that children are thought of as bringing joy and liveliness to households, and without them, houses

tend to feel lonely (Allerton 2012; 2013: 54; Carsten 1997: chap. 2; Jocano 1969: 14; 1983: 160). At that time, too, Lola Ising was recovering from an illness, and thus had to hand over Tito Nestor to his Papá Enso and Mamá Pilar, who lived next to the Mahilways.

The couple Enso and Pilar took Tito Nestor as one of their own and doted on him. As the couple's children were all girls, Tito Nestor became their only son. Significantly, as Enso's and Pilar's household was much smaller compared with Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's, and because of Enso's comparatively more comfortable and secure standing (see Chapter 1), Tito Nestor's needs and wants were provided for.

'He'd eat *adobo*,' remarked Tito Benjie, 'but for us, it'd just be dried fish.'⁴ As I described in Chapter 2, limited quantity and variety of food was one way in which the Mahilways and many other old-timers in Santa Rosa described the hardship that they experienced in the past. He continued: 'And he'd get upset if he'd be given twenty pesos for his daily allowance. It had to be at least fifty pesos. The rest of us had to make do with 30 centavos each!'

Moreover, Tito Nestor had a fairly easy time with his Papá Enso and Mamá Pilar. Unlike his siblings, who, as we saw in Chapter 2, had to bear the strictness of their parents and a paternal uncle, Tito Nestor was always able to go out of the house to hang out with his friends. The affection and indulgence given by the couple to Tito Nestor appear to have aggravated a tendency amongst men, especially during childhood and adolescence, to be more mobile than their female counterparts, and to spend an inordinate amount of time with their *barkada*.

The bond between Tito Nestor and his uncle and aunt became rather strong. Although he would later be joined by two other siblings, Tito Benjie and Tita Olive, unlike these two, who arrived as school children and who left after graduating from university, Tito Nestor arrived as an infant and he stayed in his uncle's house well into his adulthood, and indeed, until his death. When Enso and Pilar died, their surviving daughter Lucing inherited their property, and these in turn were bequeathed to her cousins, Tito Benjie and Tito Nestor. This property included her

⁴ *Adobo* is pork or chicken stewed in soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, bay leaves, and pepper corn. It is often described as the 'national dish' of the Philippines.

parents' house and the one-hectare lot in Santa Rosa that they received, through Lolo Minong's intercession, from the state's agrarian reform programme. Lucing likewise inherited the right to cultivate the rest of the Reyeses' property, although by the time of her death, it had already reverted to its owners (see Chapter 1). As I will return to shortly, Tito Nestor benefited from this property even before Lucing's death.

The siblings' recollections of Tito Nestor often took on a tone of amusement, ending most of the time in laughter, a gentle shaking of the head, and a soft sigh. In these recollections, their brother was portrayed as full of mischief, much as children or teen-agers—in particular, boys—were spoken of. Here I am reminded of how one of the Hiligaynon words for vice, *bisyo* (from the Spanish *vicio*), is also used to mean naughtiness and disobedience, especially of children. Frozen in the time of childhood and youth, memories of Tito Nestor appeared to elicit neither disappointment nor shame amongst her siblings. From the vantage point of the present, Tito Nestor's escapades seemed to be facts that must simply be accepted.

I must also add that notwithstanding Tito Nestor's unfinished degree, his siblings portrayed him as an innately intelligent person, particularly when it came to numbers. One time, said Tita Dolor, their sister Tita Olive, who taught mathematics at school, was getting frustrated as she could not solve a few problems that she was scheduled to discuss in class the following day. Tito Nestor solved the problems with no difficulty. Thus, a joke that I heard amongst the siblings concerned how their brother excelled in two subjects: maths and drinking. Notably, and as I will return to in the next section, maths, along with the sciences, engineering, medicine, and law were historically associated with men.

I have already mentioned how Tito Nestor had a reputation for being generous. Within the family, this generosity was particularly remembered in terms of Tito Nestor's fondness for Tita Amy's only daughter. Presumably because he and his wife did not have their own child, he showered his niece with affection and gifts. In the same way that Tito Nestor was shielded from his parents and his paternal uncle by his Mamá Pilar and Papá Enso, Tita Amy's daughter would always seek refuge in her uncle Nestor's house whenever her parents (her mother, in particular) would scold her.

Yet, this generosity was also the subject of ambivalence amongst the Mahilways. When Tito Nestor was hospitalised prior to his death in 1992, his siblings discovered that he had been borrowing money from a family friend who had been leasing slightly more than half of their cousin Lucing's inherited land. It was eventually revealed that Tito Nestor used the money in helping his wife's nieces and nephews find work abroad. The leased land was eventually sold by their cousin Lucing to help pay for Tito Nestor's unpaid debts and hospital expenses.

Compared with Tito Nestor's non-completion of a university degree, his penchant for drinking and womanising, and his extreme generosity, it seemed to me that his siblings were less willing to overlook his marriage to Alma. Whilst the siblings did not explicitly state their dislike of their sister-in-law, I had the sense that they did not consider her as good enough for their brother. Early in the fieldwork, whilst I was eliciting information for the family's kinship chart, I asked Tita Dolor if Alma was also from Molo. She frowned, shook her head vigorously, and said with a sneer that their sister-in-law was from Super, one of Iloilo's major public markets, and that her family was certainly not well-to-do. From the perspective of a highly educated professional, being a market vendor was a lowly occupation, presumably because of the manual labour that it entails and the absence of formal qualifications needed (see Tiryakian 1958; Voth 1970).⁵ As such, Tito Nestor's marriage to Alma defied the expectation of hypergamy that I discussed in Chapter 3. Of course, as we have seen previously, Tita Dolor and some of her sisters had been, when they were attending school, itinerant vegetable vendors on weekends.

Alma's less-than-ideal background obtained more prominence whenever the aftermath of Tito Nestor's death was discussed. Alma subdivided and sold the slightly less than 1,500 square meters of land (out of the original one hectare) that she inherited from Lucing as Tito Nestor's widow. By the time of my arrival in the field, nothing remained of this property. In addition, Alma sold the furniture and other valuables that came with the old house.

⁵ For an account of market vendors in Iloilo and the social relationships they were part of, see Blanc-Szanton (1972).

There was likewise an insinuation that Alma connived with a neighbour who carves wooden saints to have the family's antique image of the Santísima Trinidad replaced with a poor replica, and the original image sold to a collector. According to the Mahilways, their Papá Enso's maternal family had been devotees of the Santísima Trinidad, and the annual celebration of the feast had been handed down to them, given that Lucing did not have descendants. In discussing the loss of the original image, it was often suggested to me that those involved received divine punishment (*gábà*). The brother of the neighbour who made the poor replica died of throat cancer, and the collector also had a protracted illness. Alma too became ill after several years; unable to eat, and with no money to pay for the hospital, her body wasted. I discuss at length religious devotions, including the notion of *gábà*, in the next chapter.

The money generated by the sale of the land and other property was used by Alma to finance her expenses and those of her siblings' children, as they depended on her for help. Indeed, some of these children came to live with her in Santa Rosa after the death of Tito Nestor and Lucing. Quite exasperating for her sisters-in-law, Alma also used some of the money to pay for the services of ballroom dance instructors and for her nights out in the city's various hotels.

'She was a *manug-tadtad* (one who chops, splits, or cuts things),' was how Alma was described to me. Here, *tadtad* evokes both the subdividing of the land and the chopping of meat, as done by vendors in public markets. 'She was used to selling and buying things.' These descriptions, whilst obviously placing Alma within her own family's history, also underscored how her being married to Tito Nestor led to the dissipation of the properties handed down by their uncle Enso and cousin Lucing.

Highly evocative of this dissipation was the fate of Enso's old house, where, as I have said, Tito Nestor grew up and died. When Alma died in the early 2000s, Tito Ruel (Tita Amy's husband) had to cover holes in the wall and the floor and had to reinforce the first floor of the house before the coffin could be brought in for the wake. Alma did not bother to have the house repaired, as she used her money for her outings and the expenses of her nephews and nieces. When I arrived in Santa Rosa, the house no longer existed as the Mahilways had it demolished soon after Alma's death. In its old place grew shrubs.

In piecing together and sketching Tito Nestor's biography, I am reminded of how some of my interlocutors in Santa Rosa and elsewhere in Iloilo spoke to me of the disappearance of Iloilo's elite families. As I elaborated in Chapter 1, this disappearance was portrayed to me partly in terms of descendants not valuing education and being ensnared in various vices, leading to the squandering of a family's wealth. Although the properties that Tito Nestor inherited from his Papá Enso and cousin Lucing were not particularly substantial, his life trajectory—one clearly inflected by local notions of masculinity—resonated with the downward mobility experienced by some of Iloilo's elite families. Such a downward mobility was in stark contrast with the upward movement aspired for by would-be middle classes.

Higher dreams

Thus far, I have suggested that failure to conform with desired life trajectories and outcomes had led to Tito Nestor's—and his descendant's—omission from, or at best, relegation to the background of, the Mahilways' narratives and remembrances. To the extent that Tito Nestor was incorporated into these memories and stories, his siblings drew on a construal of what it means to be a man (indeed, a boy or a young man) to justify their brother's shortcomings. The rehabilitation of Tito Nestor in the family's narratives often entailed emphasising his wife's objectionable characteristics and acts. Here, differences in social origins complicate the ideal prevalent in the region that affines would eventually become like siblings, especially after the birth of children (Cannell 1999: chap. 2; Carsten 1997).

Yet, as the preceding chapters make clear, educational and professional success was very much contingent on being physically away from Santa Rosa. Several reasons—including Iloilo's economic condition, the expansion of the educational bureaucracy in the countryside, and later, the state's promotion of transnational labour migration—accounted for the need to be away. In the case that I consider in this section, brothers' absence from the village, which produced not only middle-class success, but also diminished involvement in family life, was accounted for in terms of what sons and brothers often do once they become married.

Tito Benjie, in many ways, struck me as the opposite of Tito Nestor. Unlike his deceased brother, Tito Benjie graduated from university with a degree in mechanical engineering, and had a flourishing career in Manila, Cebu, and Dubai before retiring in 2011. During my fieldwork in Santa Rosa, Tito Benjie lived with Tita Dina, his wife of about thirty years, in their house in Cebu, another major island and urban centre in the Visayas. Although already retired, he continued to consult for a construction firm. Their children, Michelle and Glenn, were in their late 20s and had been working as nurses abroad; they were two of the migrant health professionals in the family (see Chapter 4). Whilst I was in the village, Tito Benjie and Tita Dina visited several times, including during the celebration of the feast of the Santísima Trinidad in May, and during Lola Ising's hospitalisation and its aftermath.

On one of the few less busy evenings during Lola Ising's wake, Tito Benjie narrated how, as a child, he wanted to become a doctor, which in the 1950s and 1960s was a profession mainly for men from the upper classes; it was also the most prestigious profession (Cariño 1973: chap. 2; Tiryakian 1958; Voth 1970).⁶ Because the family could not afford the cost of a medicine degree, Lola Ising asked him to choose another, more affordable path. As it so happened, Tito Benjie secured a competitive scholarship from the city government, and this allowed him to complete a five-year degree in mechanical engineering from San Agustin.

Had he not secured the scholarship, Tito Benjie speculated that he would have been a merchant seaman, as many other men in Santa Rosa had become. 'It's the most common option for the men here,' he explained. Indeed, after the Second World War, but particularly from the 1970s, merchant seafaring became prominent in Santa Rosa and elsewhere in Iloilo.⁷ Some of the families in the village that I came to know of even had two or three generations of seamen. In several cases, careers in

⁶ The gendered and classed characteristic of the medical profession in the Philippines can be traced back to its origins during the Spanish period, which I touched on briefly in Chapter 2. For a recent historical account of the profession in the Philippines, see Warwick Anderson's (2007) essay.

⁷ The history of Filipinos in global merchant seafaring extends back to the late 18th century, as Aguilar (2012) has documented, although it is the increased presence of Filipinos in merchant ships beginning in the 1970s that has attracted most attention. For contemporary accounts of Filipino seafarers, their families, and their working conditions, see Fajardo (2011), Lamvik (2002), and S.C. McKay (2007b; 2015).

the merchant navy allowed families—formerly landless—to move out of Santa Rosa and buy properties elsewhere in Iloilo, and for some, in Manila.

Earlier cohorts of Ilonggo merchant seamen were employed mainly by domestic inter-island shipping companies, but later cohorts tended to work on transnational routes. In 2014, Iloilo and the greater Western Visayas had a reputation for their sizeable population of seafarers. Due to the dollar remittances they send, they were recognised as one of the drivers of the economic boom of Iloilo—they and their families had become prime targets of commercial enterprises. The new gated community adjacent to the Mahilways' rice farmland, for instance, attracted numerous seamen and their families.

In Santa Rosa, the popularity of the merchant navy was explained by various villagers as having resulted from the proximity of a college offering degrees in maritime transportation and engineering. This meant minimal daily expenses for students, both in terms of fares and food. There too was the presence until the 1990s of the Iloilo-based Negros Navigation Company, which employed most of the older seamen before transnational seafaring became popular. In addition, some of these earlier seafarers (or their older male kin), as I mentioned in Chapter 2, worked as foremen or porters in the city's waterfront. Doing so facilitated eventual employment on-board the company's ships for themselves or for their younger kin. Some older male villagers, it will be recalled, were also employed as leaders and members of the gangs in the waterfront.

By the 1990s, when the merchant seamen who entered the field some twenty years prior had already assumed high-ranking positions overseas (e.g. captain, chief mate, or chief engineer), seafaring became more desirable. Career paths became visible, and high-ranking seafarers with their purchasing power became exemplars of success. They had the prerogative of recommending new hires to their companies. I was told that if, for example, your father or uncle is a captain or chief mate, then you are practically guaranteed a job if you pass the requisite examinations.

I asked Tito Benjie why he did not choose to become a merchant seaman. He smiled, before saying, 'I had higher dreams.' He was referring here both to his original ambition to become a medical doctor, and to his eventual career as an engineer.

In the immediate decades after the war, merchant seafaring did not have a good reputation. It was not recognised as a respectable profession, and was defined by the manual labour that merchant seamen, particularly those occupying low ranks, must perform. In my conversations with residents of Santa Rosa, references were often made to how low-ranking seafarers clean the deck and the engine room, and remove rust, do painting jobs, and lubricate the machinery. I was told that they are even asked to prepare coffee for their captain and other officers. During these decades, too, salaries were quite modest, especially for those working on-board domestic inter-island vessels (recall, for instance, Tita Mila's husband; see Chapter 2).

Moreover, the education and training requirements for seamen were rather low and lax. Prior to the late 1980s and early 1990s, I was told, merchant seafaring courses were not considered as undergraduate degrees, but were two-year associate degrees; in some cases, one could become a seafarer and rise through the ranks without holding a qualification—experience sufficed. Prior to the rise of Ilonggo seafarers to high-ranking positions, a prevailing conception was that these programmes were particularly appropriate for young men who did not demonstrate academic aptitude or seriousness in their studies, or who were prone to vice. Not only were maritime courses less expensive compared to degrees in medicine, law, or engineering, but the difficulties at sea were in themselves thought of as punishments that could possibly transform directionless young men into responsible adults.

Notably, whilst this conception appears to have been overshadowed in recent years by the promise of dollars, traces of this association remained visible during my time in Iloilo. Several teachers at local maritime colleges, including a neighbour of the Mahilways, remarked to me how maritime students have remained caught up in stereotypes emphasising their supposed aimlessness and intellectual dullness. In this context, achievements of maritime students in local contests, such as the search for outstanding students (where academic merit has been a major consideration, alongside organisational involvements), were often received with pride within local maritime education circles.

Finally, as I have alluded to, seafaring in the past was closely associated with the economy of the city's waterfront, which in the years leading to and immediately after the war, was a place of ill repute given the conflict and criminality that

flourished in the area (see Chapter 2). Various events led to the disruption of this association, including the fact that transnational shipping firms did not operate out of the city's port, but usually from hubs such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. Whilst there were some recruitment offices in Iloilo, most Ilonggo seamen still had to travel to Manila to search for jobs and to process their employment papers. When boarding a vessel, they did so via the regional hubs mentioned, or even further afield, depending on the specific ship's route. Moreover, not only had inter-island shipping been eclipsed by domestic air transportation, but the operations of the city's port had been taken over by the state. The family that previously lorded over the port area—and their gangs of men, as well as those of their enemies—had been curtailed (Burgos 2002). The port itself had been rehabilitated by the state.

Although Tito Benjie made clear how the merchant navy was deemed an inferior profession, it did share with mechanical engineering and medicine a historical association with men. I mentioned above medicine's gendered and classed character. In the case of merchant seafaring, it was not until the late 1990s that Filipina marine deck officers and engineers were deployed (Tangi 2016). During my fieldwork, I was told by colleagues at local maritime colleges that the field remained predominantly male in composition, and that maritime shipping companies continued to prefer male graduates over their female counterparts. Indeed, it has been noted how, in the face of a purported feminisation of transnational labour migration from the Philippines, seafaring has been one of the very few occupations where the country has retained a masculine image (S.C. McKay 2007b). As for mechanical engineering, it is consistent with a broader pattern in the Philippines and many other places where women are generally underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.⁸

For men of Tito Benjie's generation, to be employed as either merchant seaman or engineer often meant working outside of Iloilo. This is particularly obvious in the case of seafarers, where their jobs entailed prolonged periods in

⁸ See, e.g., <http://www.ched.gov.ph/central/page/higher-education-sex-disaggregated-data>, accessed 26 January 2017.

shipping vessels.⁹ Ilonggo engineers had to find jobs in other, bigger urban centres such as Manila and Cebu, where jobs in industry were more likely to be found. Particularly from the 1970s, with the construction boom in the Middle East and the Philippine state's labour export strategy, engineers from Iloilo and elsewhere in the country also started to sojourn overseas.¹⁰ From the perspective of *la longue durée*, the outmigration of engineers and seafarers is a contemporary version of the association between men and long-distance mobility (and between women and restricted mobility; see Chapter 2) that ethnographers of island Southeast Asia have noted (see, for example, Atkinson 1990; S. Errington 1989: 251; R. Rosaldo 1980; Siegel 2000 [1969]).

After graduating with a mechanical engineering degree, Tito Benjie left Santa Rosa for Manila, where he worked for several firms for 25 years. During this time, he met his wife Tita Dina. Their children were born in Manila and spent a considerable part of their childhood there. When the last company that he worked for in Manila moved its operations to Northern Luzon, Tita Dina did not want their family to move to the company's new site. She helped Tito Benjie find work in the Visayas, and the family subsequently moved to Cebu where Tito Benjie found a new job. However, in 2009, a construction firm in Dubai recruited Tito Benjie for the construction of one of the city's train lines.

During our conversations, Tito Benjie often talked about his stint in the Middle East. He was very much unlike Margold's (1995b: 292) interlocutors, all construction workers, who chose to keep silent about the degradations they experienced in the Middle East to preserve the long-standing association between manhood, long-distance travel, and cosmopolitan knowledge. For instance, he spoke with delight of the Japanese technology that they used to build the train line. What a

⁹ Here, one may make a distinction as my interlocutors did between earlier, inter-island seamen who could go home to Santa Rosa every few days or during weekends (or at least once a month in the case of those plying routes to and from Mindanao and Manila) and later, transnational seafarers whose contracts usually lasted between nine months and one year (but longer in the past).

¹⁰ To my knowledge, most studies of Filipino men in the Middle East focus on construction workers (e.g., K. Gibson & Graham 1986; Margold 1995b) and not on professionals, such as engineers. Some recent works focus on Filipino professionals in the Middle East, but not specifically on men (Johnson 2010). Filipino engineers, in general, have not been the focus of scholarship unlike their Indonesian counterparts (Barker 2005; Mrázek 2002). The exception is Cariño (1973: chap. 4).

wonder it was, he said, to bore kilometres of tunnel underground without the buildings above collapsing. He also conveyed how it was to work amidst the oppressive heat of Dubai, exacerbated no doubt by the fact that he and his colleagues were working in the depths of the earth. Sweat dripping profusely from the body, leaving marks on the soil; shirts and towels soaked a couple of hours into a day's work; bottles of water consumed to avoid dehydration—these were the stuff of his recollections.

His narrations too were not confined to Dubai. The thought of train lines took us to Tokyo, Singapore, and Hong Kong, places known for their efficient public transportation systems. It also took us to Manila, where the train system had been suffering from congestion, limited lines and carriages, and ageing infrastructure, ultimately the result of the state's underfunding of public transportation. Comparing Manila's train system with those of Dubai and the three other places, Tito Benjie was led to articulate a sense of dissatisfaction with the governance of the country's capital, and of the dismal place of the Philippines in the global scheme of things. Here, his voice joined the cacophony of Manila's middle classes who had been complaining about the worsening traffic situation in the Philippine metropolis and its decrepit public transportation system. Like Tito Benjie, many members of Manila's middle classes had either been to the metropolitan centres of Asia and possibly beyond, or had relatives and friends working in those cities.

In 2011, after almost three years in Dubai, Tito Benjie retired and returned to the Philippines. His employer wanted to extend his contract, but because his children were set to leave for their nursing jobs overseas, Tito Benjie had to decline so he could come home to Cebu and be with Tita Dina. Although Tito Benjie inherited plots of land in Santa Rosa (one from his cousin Lucing, and the other from his parents), he and his family had opted to stay in Cebu.

With both of them retired—Tita Dina was an English language teacher to Korean students—and their children by now working abroad, the couple now had considerable time for leisure. They would often go out to the city's various cafés and restaurants. Every now and then, they would also visit resorts and other attractions in the surrounding towns. A consummate mobile phone photographer, Tita Dina would always post pictures from their dates—mostly of themselves and at times, of

the food they ate—on her Facebook wall. When one time I remarked to Tita Amy that Tito Benjie and Tita Dina were always out on dates, she laughed and said, ‘Of course, they’ve nothing else to do! They’re retired and their children aren’t in Cebu.’

The couple had also taken to travelling, and at one point visited their son in Australia. There were also plans of visiting their daughter in Canada. Likewise, a couple of years before my fieldwork, they and their children, along with Tita Monica and her husband, and Tita Amy, went on a holiday to Macau and Hong Kong. ‘They’ve become travellers,’ Tita Dolor quipped to me a couple of months before I first met Tito Benjie and Tita Dina. ‘It’s because they’re already retired,’ she added. Mobility, in the form of tourism, was a consequence of, and perhaps even a reward for, earlier labour migration.

Professional success for Tito Benjie was thus intertwined with absence from Santa Rosa. It was also wrapped up with his own marriage and family life. Indeed, being away from Santa Rosa enabled him to meet Tita Dina in Manila. Although Tita Dina hailed from Negros, which, as I noted in other parts of this thesis, had dense historical ties with Iloilo, it would have been improbable for her and Tito Benjie to meet had Tito Benjie stayed in Iloilo. They met in Manila where she attended university and had her first job.

Here I also note that in forming his own family in Manila, and then Cebu, Tito Benjie realised the ideal of children forming their own household—upon or soon after marriage. Although in the past this meant having one’s own house in the village or perhaps elsewhere in Molo or Iloilo, the realities of the labour market were such that for Tito Benjie, household formation had to take place in the metropolitan centres of Manila and Cebu. Notably, whilst such an ideal is for married children in general, it is particularly pronounced for sons. If a married son lives with his parents, I was told, he risks putting his wife in a conflictual position with respect to his parents and siblings; if a married daughter and her husband lives with her parents, the husband’s autonomy and self-esteem may become constrained.

Notably, some anthropologists have written about the presence of an ‘ideology of virilocality’ in the Visayas and other parts of the Philippines, which seems to be related to the production and maintenance of hierarchies and the transmission of properties, and which appears to be identified with older generations

and elite families (Cannell 1999: chap. 2; Dumont 1992; Murray 1970). Amongst the people I worked with, however, such an ideology did not appear to be in place. Instead, post-marital residence tended to be ambilocal during the first few years of marriage, depending on the available resources of each spouse's natal family; if a couple must choose between virilocal and uxorilocal residence, the latter seemed to be favoured given the idea that daughters ought to maintain close ties with their families of birth (see Chapter 6). Neolocal residence, however, was deemed by my interlocutors as the most ideal as it is the least prone to conflicts between in-laws. Such an ideal is close to that observed by M.A. Gonzalez (1965: 24) for Iloilo, and Hart (1980) for the eastern part of Negros island.¹¹

In Santa Rosa, the ability to establish one's own household was closely associated with financial autonomy. Husbands, in particular, were expected to provide for their families, whilst wives often had the responsibility of managing the household's finances. Hence, if a couple lives with the husband's family, the wife's ability to manage their finances become restricted, especially if the husband was asked by his parents for financial help. If the wife asserted control over her husband's earnings, it would not be surprising for her in-laws to depict her as selfish and disrespectful. In addition, for men, marriage and household formation are also associated with the attenuation of ties with their *barkada*, who, as we have seen in the previous section, are particularly important during their younger years. Moreover, the idea that husbands are providers for their families dovetails with labour conditions in encouraging the labour migration of men (Cruz 2012: 520; S.C. McKay 2015).

To return to the Mahilways, the distance between Iloilo and Manila, and later, Iloilo and Cebu, appears to have shielded Tito Benjie's marital life from the involvement of his siblings and other kin. His marriage to Tita Dina and his relationship with his siblings remained spatially distinct. One consequence was that

¹¹ Interestingly, evidence from cultural phylogenetics and historical linguistics suggest that there was an ancestral pattern of matrilocal residence in Austronesia, albeit in the case of the Philippines, this pattern appears to have evolved to accommodate patrilocal, ambilocal, and neolocal residence, partly because of culture contact (Gallego 2015; Jordan *et al.* 2009).

Tita Dina appears to have had harmonious relations with her husband's siblings, or at the very least, there were no overt conflicts between them.

Interference was also minimised in terms of child rearing. As I gleaned from Tita Amy and Tita Monica, Tito Benjie was particularly strict and even authoritarian when it came to raising his children, much like their father's brother (Lolo Pabling) was to them when they were young (see Chapter 2). One story shared with me was how a very young Glenn (Tito Benjie's and Tita Dina's son), when their family spent the Christmas holidays in Santa Rosa, wanted to eat hotdogs for breakfast; there were only eggs, dried fish, and fried rice. Glenn started to cry, and Tito Benjie scolded him and hit him with a belt until he ate what was served on the table. Tita Amy tried to intervene, but her brother rebuffed her. In Manila and Cebu, of course, Glenn and his sister did not have their aunts, uncles, and grandparents to turn to. The irony was that Tito Benjie moved to his Papá Enso's house when he was a school boy after he hit his sister, Tita Lina, on her forehead with a drinking glass. Scared that Lolo Pabling would punish him, he ran off to his Papá Enso's house, and stayed there until he graduated from university.

The consequences of distance went both ways, however. Tito Benjie became less involved in the family's affairs in Santa Rosa. For instance, as he himself made clear, the dissipation of the properties handed down by their Papá Enso and cousin Lucing that I discussed above occurred precisely because he was already based in Manila. It was only when he came home for his sister-in-law Alma's funeral that he discovered that the house was already broken down, and the valuables in it gone.

Distance, of course, does not necessarily lead to the attenuation of ties and responsibilities, as Tita Monica's case discussed in Chapter 4 vividly demonstrates. Tito Benjie himself would often call his sister Tita Amy on the telephone and exchange text messages with her, although these exchanges and conversations occurred markedly less frequently than those between Tita Amy and Tita Monica. Tito Benjie also kept in touch through his Facebook account, although Tita Dina was the more frequent Facebook user. Unless Tita Amy urgently needed to speak with her brother, it was often the case that she would ask her sons Echo and Mark to send a message to their aunt Dina using Facebook or text messaging to convey something

to their uncle. Tita Dina would also do the same, if her husband wanted to communicate with Tita Amy and the other folk in Santa Rosa.

As the mediated Facebook and text messages suggest, Tito Benjie's relationship with his family in Santa Rosa combined impulses for proximity and distance. Although he remained connected to his natal family, his relationship with them bore the marks of geographical separation, as well as the need to obtain necessary distance.

These seemingly contradictory impulses were likewise legible in economic terms. When he returned to the Philippines from Dubai, Tito Benjie invested in a water refilling station in Santa Rosa. Due to the limited reach of the local water utility, a significant proportion of residents in the village and elsewhere in Iloilo City had been relying on privately owned water treatment and refilling stations to provide them with potable water.

Tito Benjie had Tita Amy's old store by the gates of the family compound renovated, and there he installed machines for the refilling business. It had been in operation for several years when I came to know the Mahilways. Although Tito Benjie was neither physically present in Santa Rosa nor involved in the running of the station, the business and sanitary permits were in his name. Tita Amy and her family, however, were the ones who ran the refilling station. During the first few years of the refilling station's operation, Tito Benjie shared in the profits, but after he recouped his investment, the station's earnings started to be allotted to Tita Amy.

I take it that having the permits in Tito Benjie's name was a recognition of both his financial investment and of his continued links to Santa Rosa. At the same time, investing in the station and leaving it to Tita Amy appears to have been a way for Tito Benjie to attend to the financial needs of his sibling—especially in so far as she was the one who was left to care for Lola Ising and Tita Dolor (see next chapter)—without making himself vulnerable to periodic financial demands that might very well trigger marital conflict. By providing a source of livelihood to Tita Amy, Tito Benjie thus simultaneously contributed to the upkeep of his mother and his siblings, and insulated himself and his marriage from potential conflict.

In contemplating Tito Benjie's impulses for proximity and distance, I am led back to the scene of Lola Ising's illness and death, one where Tito Benjie repeatedly

appeared and disappeared. As I have mentioned, he and Tita Dina came home to Santa Rosa when Lola Ising was ill. They arrived several days after Lola Ising was rushed to the hospital. During this time, Tito Benjie took over Tita Amy's duties in the hospital. He also took care of the hospital expenses for a few days. This was the arrangement until Tita Monica's arrival. Whenever a relative arrived from Manila or elsewhere, Tito Benjie fetched them from the airport. After about a week, he and Tita Dina returned to Cebu, as he was needed in a construction project that he was consulting for. He came back briefly to Santa Rosa after Tita Monica returned to New York, before going back once more to Cebu. Amidst his mother's illness, he also had to attend to the life that he had built in Cebu.

Perhaps inadvertently, returning to Cebu allowed Tito Benjie to avoid the financial responsibilities that his mother's hospitalisation and death entailed, except for the expenses that he paid for during his initial visit, and a later contribution. Likewise, whilst his children contributed some amount when they came home to Santa Rosa, their shares were limited. Tito Benjie's siblings hinted that their sister-in-law, Tita Dina, was 'very good' at managing her family's finances.

Tito Benjie and Tita Dina came back a couple of days after Lola Ising died. During the wake, Tito Benjie was assigned to do the liturgical readings every time a mass was held in the Mahilways' house. He was also in charge of coordinating with the manager of the cemetery for the transfer of the remains of some of their deceased kin into an empty sepulchral niche (*nitso*) to make space for Lola Ising's coffin. During the funeral mass, Tito Benjie was tasked to speak for the family and give the usual thanksgiving address just before the coffin was brought to the cemetery. Particularly when both parents have died, such a task is often reserved for the oldest sibling, and when the oldest is a daughter, the oldest son may take on her responsibility, as did Tito Benjie. Sons may in fact be given such a task because of a perception (or expectation) that they are more likely to reach the end of their address without faltering emotionally.

Tito Benjie and Tita Dina left Santa Rosa after three days, for Tita Dina had to attend a wedding in Negros where she was the godmother. This was the day when the family went to the beach to wash away the presence of death (see Chapter 4). Tita Dina and Tito Benjie were supposed to join the rest of the family before heading to

the airport, but because of delays in preparing the food for the outing, they opted not to join us for fear of missing their flight.

When Tito Benjie, upon bringing out his and his wife's luggage to the living room, told his siblings that they would not be going to the beach after all, there was, for about a minute, palpable silence in the room. His siblings were perhaps disappointed that their brother would miss the day's events, as well as sadness that just three days after their mother's burial, the family was already starting to disperse. Yet, the silence could very well have been a recognition that for their brother, life is to be lived elsewhere. Indeed, for the rest of the post-funeral period for the prayers for the dead, Tito Benjie was absent from Santa Rosa. His sisters, particularly Tita Amy, Tita Dolor, and Tita Remy, bore the responsibility for the prayers.

Speculations

In so far as sons and brothers, for economic as well as marital reasons, tend to distance themselves from their parents and siblings, they are usually thought of as less reliable compared with their sisters when it comes to attending to their natal family's needs. Physical distance and their own need to fulfil obligations as the provider for their spouse and children do not make them ideal sources of support for their natal family. Yet, as the preceding section demonstrates, men are still expected to provide such support, and striking a balance between fulfilling the duties of a good son (or brother) and those of a good husband (or father) is, by itself, an achievement. Not all men, of course, are able to achieve this balance. What happens when, for various reasons, one is unable to fulfil any of these duties?

When I first met the Mahilways, Tito Celso had not been home to Santa Rosa for the past seven years. This was even though his and his wife Tita Lorna's house was right beside the family's main house. When I arrived in the field, only Tita Lorna lived in their house, whilst Tito Celso resided in Manila with their son, Patrick, who I briefly introduced in the preceding chapter. At first, Tito Celso's absence did not merit much comment from his mother and his siblings. To the extent that it was mentioned, it was in relation to his career as a banker.

Later, it was revealed to me that he was, in fact, separated from Tita Lorna, and had been cohabiting with his new partner, Wilma. Given the absence of divorce in the Philippines, and the fact that he and Tita Lorna had sought neither legal separation nor the annulment of their marriage, they continued to be husband and wife from the perspective of the state and the Catholic Church, and of their kin and acquaintances.

I will return to Tito Celso's separation from Tita Lorna below. For now, I wish to point out that Tito Celso's prolonged absence from Santa Rosa started in the early 1990s when, after years of working for the Iloilo branch of a bank, he was assigned to that bank's branch in Davao, a city on the island of Mindanao. After a few years, he was promoted and moved to the bank's headquarters in Manila. In the early 2000s, however, he was dismissed from his job, and along with several co-workers, accused of embezzling funds from the bank.¹² The case was notorious, as news of the supposed embezzlement led to massive withdrawals and the bank's temporary closure and eventual sale. After almost five years of litigation, the court dismissed the case against Tito Celso, after his lawyers demonstrated that he was neither amongst the masterminds nor did he benefit from the embezzlement.

I first learnt of Tito Celso's imprisonment from Lola Ising. We were talking about her daily activities, and I asked her if she watched television. She said she did, and would often watch the news before sleeping at night. I asked her why. 'To catch a glimpse of my son. That's the only way I get to see him,' she said. She was alluding to the broadcast news coverage of the embezzlement litigation and the bank's closure. Lola Ising mentioned too that a couple of years before my arrival in the field, Tito Celso had figured in another case. The investment company he worked for after he was acquitted of embezzlement became insolvent; the company's executives were accused of engaging in a pyramid scam. Although state investigators considered prosecuting Tito Celso, he was eventually excluded due to a lack of evidence linking him directly to the scam. Referring to her son's history of involvement in failed ventures, Lola Ising pointed out with a cackle that 'he was always with the losing (*pierde*) party.'

¹² I have deliberately omitted details of the case to protect the identity of the people I worked with.

Although Tito Celso was acquitted in 2007, his involvement in the embezzlement case was seen by his siblings as having truncated his career as a banker. Thus, mused Tito Benjie: ‘If not for the case, he’d have been a bank president by now!’ As his reputation had become sullied, Tito Celso was unable to find work in the banking sector. His siblings speculated that this inability forced their brother to work for a questionable firm, a decision that did not lead to a good outcome.

Importantly, despite being cleared of the charges in 2007, Tito Celso did not return to Santa Rosa. This was explained by Tita Amy as an outcome of her brother’s decision to part ways with his wife. Tita Lorna, I was told, refused to visit Tito Celso in prison, citing her work as a school teacher as her reason. She also cited the expenses involved in travelling from Iloilo to the detention facility in Manila. Similarly, she balked at the amount of money required by Tito Celso for his legal as well as daily expenses. At one point, Tito Celso had to borrow money from Tita Amy; Tito Benjie likewise mortgaged the piece of land he inherited from his cousin Lucing to help defray his brother’s expenses.

According to Tita Amy, Tita Lorna’s refusal to visit was a cause of embarrassment for Tito Celso. The wives of other accused would always visit their husbands in prison, and some in fact rented houses and apartments near the detention facility so they could visit every day. Whenever his co-accused looked for his wife, Tito Celso had no one to show. It was as if he was not married to anyone.

Looking back, Tita Amy thought Tita Lorna’s refusal to visit Tito Benjie was consistent with what she described as her sister-in-law’s tight-fistedness. Even prior to Tito Benjie’s incarceration, Tita Lorna had had a tendency to be very strict with their family’s finances. When Tito Celso farmed the Mahilways’ riceland in the late 1980s, Tita Lorna made sure to be present during the harvesting, so that she could keep track of the sacks of rice gathered from the farm. When the rice was sold, she kept all the money inside a safe, the combination of which only she knew. This effectively prevented Tito Celso from paying debts that he incurred to pay for farm inputs.

Tita Lorna’s decision not to visit must have led Tito Celso to look elsewhere for affection and emotional support, Tita Amy mused several times. It was perhaps

why he turned to Wilma, whom he met during his time at the bank. Unlike Tita Lorna, Wilma visited Tito Celso in the prison often. Tito Celso eventually introduced Wilma to his co-prisoners and their wives as ‘Mrs Mahilway.’

I was told that when Tito Celso decided to part ways with Tita Lorna, the latter attempted to save their marriage by making a last-minute trip to the detention centre, for which she uncharacteristically paid all expenses, including those of Tita Dolor and Tita Remy who she asked to accompany her. Tita Lorna sought to speak with her husband, but Tito Celso would not receive them. ‘Could you really blame him?’ Tita Amy posed rhetorically.

This last-minute trip also introduced a rift into Tito Celso’s relationship with his siblings. He accused Tita Dolor and Tita Remy of taking the side of his erstwhile wife. Moreover, he blamed them for supposedly shaming him in front of his co-accused by accompanying Tita Lorna to the detention facility. Here, the two sisters shared the blame with Tita Monica, who, during a separate visit to the facility with Tita Lorna, noticed on the visitor’s log book that a Mrs Mahilway had already come to see their brother. Tita Monica, by pointing out to the people at the reception desk that Tita Lorna was in fact Mrs Mahilway, exposed the illicitness of Tito Celso’s relationship with Wilma.

Tito Celso’s prolonged absence from Santa Rosa was most marked at the time of Lola Ising’s illness and death. His sisters tried to convince him to come home to Santa Rosa, but Tito Celso remained steadfast in his decision to stay away. He castigated his sisters, and told them that instead of congregating in the hospital and supposedly gossiping all day long, they should pray. Their mother’s illness, he told his siblings, was possibly a form of divine test or punishment. At one point, frustrated at her brother’s obdurateness, Tita Amy shouted at him on the telephone before banging down the receiver.

In lieu of him coming home, Tito Celso sent his son Patrick to help care for Lola Ising. Tito Celso also tried to compensate for his absence by speaking to his mother every day through Patrick’s mobile phone. As will be recalled, Lola Ising was in a coma for several days, and when she became conscious, was unable to speak. Tito Celso’s sisters, however, insisted that being physically present was different from speaking on the phone; more so because during one of his calls to Lola Ising when

she was still unconscious, Tito Celso promised that when she opened her eyes, he would be the first thing that she would see.

The siblings thought Tito Celso lacked a sense of the gravity of their mother's condition. Tita Amy articulated this thought one afternoon in the hospital, when she recounted how she had received a text message from their brother, telling them not to worry, for he was sure that their mother would live. Tito Celso, apparently, dreamt that his parents visited him. In the dream, Lolo Minong wore white clothes, whilst Lola Ising wore a red dress. Tito Celso interpreted his dream to mean that Lola Ising would become well. Tita Amy dismissed this interpretation. 'Doesn't he understand,' she asked with incredulity, 'that our mother's asking him to visit her?' She continued: 'how could he not understand that our mother will soon join our father? Our father's dead, that's why he's wearing white clothes! And our mother's dying, hence the red dress!'

Tito Benjie, on the other hand, emphasised how, unlike Tito Celso, he chose to come home to Santa Rosa. 'I guess each of us has his own set of priorities. For some, it's money. In my case, it's family.' He added that because Tito Celso sent fifteen thousand pesos (approx. £215)—just enough to cover a day's hospital expenses—their brother must have thought that their mother's illness was not life-threatening. At this point, Tita Monica, who had then just arrived from New York, interjected, and said that she would not have spent on her airfare if their mother were not gravely ill.

A few speculations came forth amidst Tito Celso's decision not to come home to Santa Rosa. Some of his siblings thought he had possibly gone mad. They alluded to their brother's post-imprisonment turn to Evangelical Christianity, which at least in the context of Manila, had considerably attracted professionals, university students, and other middle classes. Their brother now had a *litik* (crack or split), presumably from his newly-found religiosity. How could he possibly suggest, his siblings asked, that their mother's illness was a form of divine punishment?

There was also a suggestion that it was impossible for Tito Celso to ignore their ailing mother. As a son, he could not have possibly endured not seeing Lola Ising. He must have secretly visited her in the hospital, I heard. With Patrick sleeping

in the hospital every night, it would have been easy for Tito Celso to slip in at night when his siblings were not around.

Neighbours and fellow villagers also speculated about Tito Celso's absence. I was asked one day by a close family friend of the Mahilways when I visited her if Tito Celso had already arrived. When I told her of Tito Celso's continued absence, she speculated that he probably feels ashamed over his imprisonment and alleged involvement in a failed pyramid scheme. Some neighbours familiar with Tito Celso's career and estrangement from his family raised the possibility that he was hiding from those who know him and his career misadventures.

Even Lola Ising's prolonged hospitalisation and struggle for life became the subject of speculation. On various occasions, I heard Tita Amy and her sisters, as well as the nurses and doctors in the hospital, posit the idea that Lola Ising was perhaps waiting for someone before succumbing to death. This idea drew its plausibility from Lola Ising's habit, notwithstanding her very limited mobility, of looking in the direction of her room's door every time someone came in or stepped outside. When she was able to mouth words, albeit with no voice, this was taken to mean that she was looking for her absent son. For Tita Amy in particular, this idea heightened her animosity towards their brother. How could Tito Celso let their mother's suffering drag on, she asked.

The night before Lola Ising's funeral, Tito Celso arrived in Santa Rosa. It was already past midnight, and most of his siblings were either already asleep or were preparing to go to bed, as they needed to rest in preparation for the following day's events. Only Tita Mila and some of her cousins and nephews, and Tita Lorna remained awake as they were playing *mah jong* and card games whilst keeping vigil by the coffin.

I was talking to Tita Monica inside her room when her nephew and Tita Mila's son, Arnold, knocked on the door. 'Tito Celso's here,' he announced. Tita Monica refused to go out of the room. Apparently, so did Tita Amy, who promptly switched off the light in the treehouse, where she and her husband had been staying, when she saw Tito Celso alight from the vehicle. Arnold implored his aunts to face their brother, 'so this can finally end.' Tita Amy at first pretended to be asleep and

did not answer her nephew's calls, but after repeated attempts by Arnold, agreed to confront Tito Celso on condition that Tita Monica should also be there.

Not having met Tito Celso, I was curious to catch a glimpse of him. I tried to step out of the room, but Tita Monica expressly told me to stay inside as 'there's drama going on.' I feigned the need to get a glass of water from the kitchen, but unfortunately for me, I did not realise that Tita Monica had a glass of water with her. She instructed me to sleep on the couch inside the room. Defeated and deeply frustrated, I went to sleep, only to be woken up in the middle of the night with the sound of Tita Monica whispering to her husband about her brother's unexpected arrival.

The following morning, Tito Celso's arrival was the topic of discussion over breakfast. Tita Monica hypothesised that perhaps the reason why Patrick had disappeared for hours the previous night was because he went to the airport to fetch his father. When Echo, Patrick's cousin and Tita Amy's youngest son, joined us for breakfast, Tita Monica questioned him. Tita Monica's hypothesis turned out to be true. At his father's behest, Patrick had rented a car and fetched his father and Wilma.

The siblings were enraged by Tito Celso's decision to bring Wilma to the wake. They emphasised that whilst Tito Celso could have simply left Wilma inside the car, he decided to bring her inside the house. This action was taken as disrespectful to Lola Ising, as well as Tita Lorna, whom, as I pointed out, was present. Indeed, this scene was described in conversations as a scandal, like those portrayed in Filipino and American movies, where a mistress suddenly appears at the wake of a deceased person, thus sully the family's reputation. Perhaps to lighten up the situation, I was teased several times by some of the Mahilways that I missed the screening of a blockbuster movie.

During conversations pertaining to Tito Celso's sudden arrival, it was often pointed out that Wilma always stayed close to their brother and never let him out of her sight. This too generated its own speculation. Tita Amy, in particular, thought that Tito Celso might be under a spell cast by (or for) Wilma. It was my turn to help lighten up the mood. Upon hearing Tita Amy's speculation, I quipped that given Wilma's need to stay close to Tito Celso, the spell must be operating via Bluetooth, a

wireless technology for short-distance communication. Tita Amy and the others laughed; she pinched me on my arm. 'So now you know how to make jokes,' she said with a chuckle.

On the day of the funeral, Tito Celso did not come back to the house, and thus was not part of the family pictures taken that day, much like his brother Tito Nestor's daughter and grandson. Although he did go to the church, he did not step out of the vehicle; he observed the funeral mass from the parking lot. Aside from the siblings and those awake during Tito Celso's arrival, no one else knew about his visit.

As Lola Ising's burial niche was being sealed, Tita Dina approached me and Tita Lorna; aside from us, only Lola Ising's children and some of the grandchildren remained. Neighbours, friends, and other relatives had left minutes earlier. 'Let's give them time to be with their mother,' Tita Dina said, referring to the siblings. As we walked towards the gate of the cemetery, Tita Dina encouraged me and Tita Lorna to go home to Santa Rosa, whilst she waited for her husband, Tito Benjie. Clueless about what was happening, I left them and took a cab going to the Mahilways' house. Tita Lorna opted to stay with Tita Dina.

Days later, I was told that the siblings were set to meet with Tito Celso, but the meeting was aborted after their brother saw Tita Lorna by the gates of the cemetery. As was the case at the funeral, Tito Celso did not alight from the car; he opted to go back to his hotel. Whilst Tita Amy and the other siblings were irritated with Tito Celso's decision to cancel the meeting, my sense was that they were equally, if not more irritated with Tita Lorna for not heeding Tita Dina's suggestion. Had the meeting pushed through, they might have convinced Tito Celso to agree to the sale of the family's rice farmland (see Chapter 1).

Months after Lola Ising's burial, the suspicion that Tito Celso had been under a spell lingered. By this time, the Mahilway siblings had gone on to resume their usual lives in different parts of the country, and indeed outside it. Of the siblings, only Tita Amy and Tita Dolor remained in the family compound in Santa Rosa. At this time too, the sale of the farmland remained unsure. The siblings were waiting for word from the developer they were selling the farmland to; at the same time, Tito Celso remained steadfast in his disagreement over the proposed sale.

To gain some certainty over whether their brother was really under a spell, and to free him if he were, Tita Amy decided to consult a *manugbulung* (healer). Under normal circumstances, the *manugbulung* requires the person suspected to be under a spell to be presented to her; in cases where the person is unable to come before her, she requires an unwashed item of clothing worn by the person or a recent photograph showing the person's face and body. Since Tito Celso did not stay in the family compound, Tita Amy did not have an unwashed item of clothing. Neither did she have a recent photograph of her brother.

It turned out however that on the night that Tito Celso visited the wake, Tita Dina, ever the photographer, surreptitiously took a picture of him talking with his siblings and a couple of nephews beside Lola Ising's coffin. In order not to attract attention, Tita Lorna went up to the foyer overlooking the area where the coffin was displayed. She used her mobile phone to take the picture, which combined with the distance of her subjects and the lack of adequate light, meant that the quality of the image was low. The picture was grainy and the faces of those on it could not be clearly seen.

Through her son Echo, Tita Amy asked me to try to enhance the quality of the image so that Tito Celso's face could be seen clearly. Because the quality of the source image was low to begin with, I could only do so much. Nevertheless, Echo and I had the enhanced image printed in one of the city's malls. Not surprisingly, when Tita Amy brought the printed picture to the *manugbulung*, it was rejected because of its quality.

I suggested to Tita Amy that we use some of the images of Tito Celso that were taken during the litigation of his embezzlement case. Taken by journalists covering the issue, the images were about a decade old. I showed them to Tita Amy on my mobile phone, and she examined them closely, identifying some of Tito Celso's co-accused, as well as their wives. There too was a picture of Tito Celso with Wilma, who the journalist identified as Mrs Mahilway. I asked her if Echo and I should have the images printed. Tita Amy hesitated initially because of the age of the images, but she eventually consented to having them printed.

I am not aware what exactly the *manugbulung* thought of the images, but I am certain that when I left the field, the conflict between Tito Celso and his siblings had

not abated, and the rice farmland continued to be owned by the family. Indeed, whilst writing an early draft of this chapter, I received news from Echo through a Facebook conversation that he and his brother Mark were at the airport as they had to send to their cousin Patrick a package of food cooked by their mother. The package was meant for Tito Celso, who was celebrating his birthday. I teased Echo that his mother and his uncle had finally made peace (*bati-bati na*; Tag.). Echo laughed and denied that this was the case. Tito Celso, in fact, had been ignoring Tita Amy's telephone calls.

Conclusion

The material that I have presented in this chapter highlights the various ways in which for the people of Santa Rosa, the pursuit of social mobility was entangled with gender and kinship. In the same manner that the most prominent educational and professional route for women in the immediate post-war decades was teaching, for the men of Santa Rosa, it was mainly merchant seafaring. In those decades, however, seafaring was deemed undesirable by those with aspiration for respectability and upward mobility, and who chose equally male-dominated fields like engineering. The prestige attached to a profession changes over time, however, and the merchant navy had become more attractive in recent decades—in contrast with teaching, which as I discussed in Chapter 4, had become less aspirational. At the same time, notions of masculinity were utilised to explain men's educational and professional failures. Men were deemed less likely to do well academically, and therefore professionally, than their sisters.

The successful pursuit of educational and professional opportunities often meant that men, much like their female counterparts, had to move to other urban centres, and even outside of the Philippines. Here, the links between social and geographical mobility are unequivocal. The movement of men, however, was deemed consistent with notions of men as more likely to engage in long-distance travel. Such movements also enabled and reinforced the ideal of neolocal post-marital residence, which as I discussed, was more pronounced for men. Geographical

labour mobility was also consistent with the ideal that men should provide for their families. Moreover, by working and establishing households away from their natal families, men became less involved in their families of orientation. However, failure to participate in the life of their families of birth, especially during moments of crisis, and to contribute to the upkeep of parents and less successful siblings, had detrimental effects for men's relations with their siblings and natal families. Here, what it meant to be a man was shaped by shifts in political economy, in the same way that particular notions of masculinity enabled broader social transformations (A. Ong & Peletz 1995).

Threaded through this chapter are the ways in which relations between men and their parents and siblings were mediated by their wives. On one level, and this applies to both men and women (see Chapter 2), marriage may endanger aspirations for social mobility or may be a mark that such aspirations had not been achieved. In cases where marriage did not endanger upward mobility, wives tended to be seen as limiting their husbands' involvement in their families of birth. At its extreme, this mediating role of women was expressed through the idiom of witchcraft, where a brother had almost become unrecognisable to his siblings.

Thus, to the extent that educational and professional routes were gendered, social mobility too was gendered. Successful pursuit of upward mobility depended on and reinforced notions of masculinity, whilst failures to become upwardly mobile were explained in gendered terms. From the vantage point of kinship, particularly siblingship, gender made a difference starting at adolescence, but especially after marriage, when brothers tended to move away from their natal families.

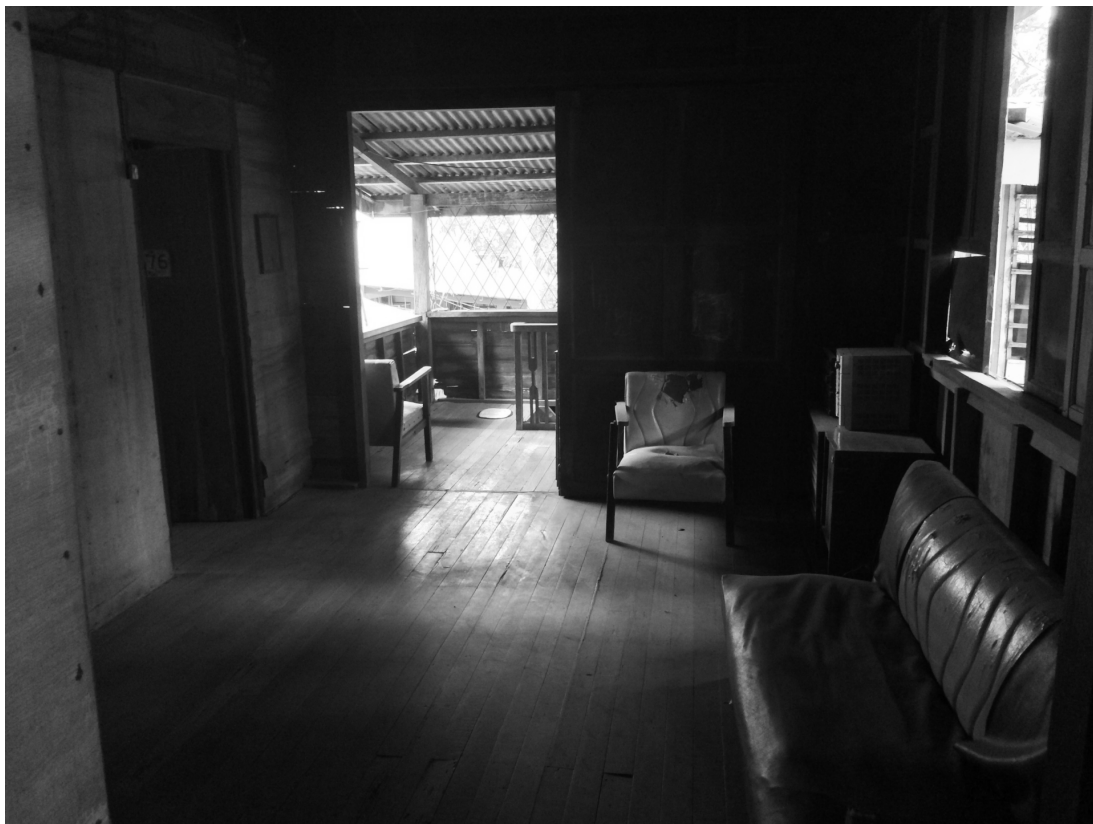


Figure 17. Tita Amy's inheritance

Chapter 6

The burdens of care: immobility and unequal responsibilities

Narrations of physical movement, as I have shown, formed one way through which my interlocutors recalled their ascent to middle-classness. Such movements were central as well to efforts at securing autonomy from parents and older kin, and led to marriages and the formation of separate households. In this chapter, I attend to how, amidst the pervasiveness and valorisation of mobility, staying behind was experienced, recognised, spoken of, and to an extent, repaid. I accentuate how a person's immobility may be a necessary consequence of and a condition of possibility for other siblings' pursuits, with repercussions for a person's own aspirations and those of her children.

In this way, I join scholars of migration who have sought to understand the experiences of the immobile and their relations with the mobile (see Khan 2016; Skeldon 2016; Toyota *et al.* 2007). In the case of the Philippines, scholars have pursued this line of enquiry by examining the repercussions of transnational migration (often of women, particularly of mothers) on the well-being of the 'left-behind' (especially children), including their health and educational outcomes (see Arguillas & Williams 2010; Asis 2006; Battistella & Conaco 1998). I build on this scholarship by foregrounding the relational consequences of migration on siblingship, a recent theme in studies of Filipino migration (Aguilar 2013a).

This chapter illustrates how a person may contest, but also live with, inequalities of burdens amongst siblings. In what ways might the desire for equality be voiced? And when such a desire is recognised, how might frayed ties of siblingship be mended? The inequalities that I discuss here include those that pertain to the maintenance of a family's status in the community, but also those surrounding care obligations (particularly towards the elderly) within the family. Accordingly, this chapter brings together scholarship that highlights how siblingship in island

Southeast Asia encompasses both equality and hierarchy (Carsten 1997; S. Errington 1990; McKinley 1981) with those that consider how obligations of care may be experienced as exacting and even oppressive, but also as sites of struggle and contestation (Das 2010; 2015; Han 2011; 2012; Kleinman 2010). Here, instead of displacing kinship (Borneman 2001), care emerges from and constitutes it. Notably, the repercussions of migration on siblings' ties with elderly parents is something that has been thus far overshadowed in the literature on the Philippines by the focus on left-behind children.

This chapter foregrounds too how becoming middle class was not just about crafting a markedly different future, but also interwoven with responsibilities and promises stemming from the past. How might promises made many decades ago under extremely different conditions continue to be upheld or perhaps be broken in the present? What might it mean to perform an obligation, if doing so entails compromising one's (and one's children's) present and future? Moreover, if, as has been shown in other contexts, the coming together of past, present, and future are fundamental to experiences of kinship (Carsten 2000*b*), what might the consequences be when, as a result of journeys of social mobility, these temporalities are at odds with each other?

Finally, this chapter demonstrates how, for the people I worked with, kinship, social mobility, and middle-classness were inseparable from Catholicism. As will become clear, siblingship and other kinship ties were intertwined with relations to the divine and the dead. These ties were likewise shaped through both ritual and everyday moments that permeated one another. Caring responsibilities were informed by Catholic notions of suffering and grace. Meanwhile, devotions to saints and religious feasts indexed class and mobility whilst being transformed by these.

Uncertain celebrations

In late December 2014, I had an inkling that not everything was all right so far as the Mahilways' annual celebration of the feast of San José was concerned. I was chatting with Tita Monica, Tita Amy, and some other family members one afternoon. I told

them that my supervisors wanted me to return to Edinburgh soon and start writing my thesis. Tita Monica asked if I would still be around for the feast, which they celebrate every 19th of March. After conveying my uncertainty over receiving permission for an extension of my fieldwork, I asked them if the celebration would, in fact, push through.

After several seconds of silence, Tita Amy said, 'we're not sure.' Perhaps having recognised the puzzled look on my face, she went on to explain that there was no longer a compelling reason to celebrate the feast. 'Mother's now gone anyway,' she mumbled before glancing away.

The feast is often described as part of the rice harvest season in March and April. Through it, rice-growing families would mark the plenitude of the season and give thanks to Saint Joseph, patron saint of labourers and a model father and provider.¹ The Mahilways' commemoration, however, was rooted in the violence and displacement caused by the Second World War. Like many other residents of Santa Rosa and Iloilo City, the family fled to the mountains in the countryside in an attempt to avoid the destruction of the war. Older villagers recalled to me how they and their families had to walk for hours, even days, in order to reach hiding places deep in the forests of Panay, only to move again after several days.

Santa Rosa became a hiding place for guerrillas, thus making it a target for retaliation. Japanese soldiers were remembered for their harshness, as they frequented the village and would often punish men for the flimsiest of reasons. At some point, possibly when they were retreating from returning American forces, Japanese soldiers burnt the village school to the ground. Also, unlike in the countryside, food was scarce in the village and elsewhere in the city, and the Japanese colonial government restricted access to food supplies in order to prioritise their soldiers (see McCoy 1980 for an account of the Japanese occupation of Western Visayas). Although unmentioned, it is also possible that villagers fled to the mountains to avoid the capture and conscription of their wives and daughters as

¹ See <http://flavoursofiloilo.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/celebrating-feast-of-san-jose-at-camina.html> and <http://flavoursofiloilo.blogspot.com/2014/03/feast-of-san-jose-traditions-rituals.html>, accessed 5 March 2017. Cf. Black 2006.

‘comfort women,’ which, given the presence of a comfort station in Iloilo, was not far-fetched (see Henson 1999; Tanaka 2002).

Amidst the war, Lolo Minong, I was told, pleaded with the divine for protection. In exchange for his family’s safety, he promised to celebrate the feast of San José every year, which they first commemorated whilst hiding in the forests. At that time, only Tita Mila and Tita Dolor had been born of the siblings. Although it was not clear why Lolo Minong specifically chose the feast, what was emphasised was the family’s deliverance from the ravages of war due to divine intervention.

Thus, during one of our initial conversations, Lola Ising and Tita Dolor conveyed how Lolo Minong would have dreams where an unknown figure—presumed to be an angel—would warn him that Japanese soldiers were on their way to the area where he and his family had been hiding. Lolo Minong would immediately instruct his wife and his daughters to pack their belongings, and they would set off in haste for a new hiding place. Those dreams, according to Lola Ising, saved their lives, for Japanese soldiers never failed to turn up once they had left.

I was also told by Tita Dolor how Lolo Minong’s youngest brother (Lolo Berting) and Lola Ising’s (Lolo Felix) were captured and set to be executed by the Imperial Japanese Army. Through the intervention of a fellow villager who was employed by a Japanese military officer as a washerwoman, Lolo Felix was saved from death. He, in turn, sought the help of the province’s governor (an Ilonggo) to secure Lolo Berting’s freedom. This latter intercession was secured in the nick of time, for when the governor and Lolo Felix arrived at the garrison, the soldiers were just about to shoot Lolo Berting. ‘It was like a miracle,’ was how Lola Ising described her brother’s and brother-in-law’s narrow escape from death.

Let me pause here to note that the Mahilways were not the only ones in Santa Rosa who celebrated feasts of saints. At least two other families celebrated the feast of San José, including the Concepcions and the Evangelistas. The Nuñezes, who lived close to the Mahilways (see Chapter 1), used to celebrate the feast but had stopped doing so for more than a decade before my arrival in the field. Some families even celebrated more than one feast, similar to how the Mahilways observed both the San José and the Santísima Trinidad. The Concepcions, for instance, also marked the Flores de Mayo, a month-long devotion to Mary.

Other families maintained statues of saints. The most famous of these saints in Santa Rosa was the Santo Entierro (the Dead Christ), which the Ocampos kept in a room in their family's main house. Every Good Friday, along with other saints connected to the Passion of Christ, it would be placed on a *carroza* (carriage) adorned with flowers, and would be taken on a procession around the village and surrounding areas. The Ocampos would also prepare a meal for their neighbours and those who participated in the procession.

As the Mahilways' commemoration of San José demonstrates, and resonating with those observed in Europe and Latin America, devotions to saints were often part of exchanges with the divine (see Christian 1989 [1972]; Gudeman 1976; Mayblin 2014). The Evangelistas, for example, started celebrating the feast of San José in the 1930s when the family's matriarch bore a child after years of disappointment. Resonating with the transferability of religious vows amongst kin that has been observed in other parts of the Catholic Philippines, the continued upkeep of saints and celebration of feasts were spoken of by villagers as the inheritance of vows (*panaad*) made by deceased ancestors (see Cannell 1999; Zialcita 1986). At the same time, the continuation of vows meant that families could ask for further intercessions from saints, such as assistance during university examinations and protection whilst working abroad. As these examples indicate, vows and devotions formed part of projects of upward mobility.

Indeed, saints and religious celebrations were historically intertwined in Iloilo with status and class. As has been noted in other parts of the Philippines, Catholic families of consequence maintained statues of saints, transmitted these images within the family, considered them kin, and often allotted a portion of their agricultural landholdings for the upkeep of saints (Cannell 1999: chap. 9; Venida 1996). This practice of having images of saints as inalienable and highly visible form of wealth, but also part of the family, is traceable to the 19th century, precisely when the elite *mestizo* class came into being (de la Cruz 2015: 50-51; see also Zóbel de Ayala 1963). In the Iloilo districts of Molo and Jaro, this association between devotions and status and class could be gleaned from the saints that form part of the yearly Good Friday procession. A number of these saints were kept by families of note that trace their economic and social standing to the Hispanic period, and who also composed the

district's erstwhile landed class. During the procession, these saints would be dressed in finery and their carriages adorned; in one case, the carriage is even described as made of gold (Feleo 2007a: 225; Labiste 2003).

In Santa Rosa, the relationship between devotions to saints and status and class took a different trajectory. As I discussed in the Introduction, the village has had a history of economic marginality. This marginality was reflected ecclesiastically. Santa Rosa was originally under the jurisdiction of the parish church in Molo, a district known for its prosperity, and in the past, a priest would visit on Sundays to hold mass in a makeshift chapel. As such, it was considered as a mere *bisita* (from the Spanish *visita*) of the parish. It was not until the 1970s, when missionaries attending to the poor arrived in the area, that Santa Rosa and the other coastal villages formed a separate parish.

Most of the devotions in the village preceded the formation of the new parish, and were often small celebrations held in the houses of families, away from the church in Molo. The Concepcions' celebration of Flores de Mayo, for example, was held in the past in a small makeshift hut by the beach. The hut has since been rebuilt into a concrete chapel through contributions from kin employed overseas. The Ocampos, on the other hand, took a cue from illustrious Moleño and Jaroeño families by having a Santo Entierro made, but only after Santa Rosa had its own parish and Good Friday procession; unlike the Moleño and Jaroeño families, the Ocampos were not landowners, and they financed their devotion mainly through the remittances sent by their merchant seamen kin.

In fact, amongst the devotions to saints that I came to know of, only one had a palpable—if tenuous—link to the world of Moleño and Jaroeño families: the Mahilways' celebration of the feast of Santísima Trinidad. Tita Dolor inherited the devotion from their second cousin Lucing, who in turn, inherited it from her father Papá Enso, whose mother was a scion of the Arevalos, a historically prominent Moleño family. Yet, owing to their Papá Enso's mother's feud with her family of birth (see Chapter 1), the Mahilways did not actually cultivate ties with the Arevalos.

Given the devotions' modest origins, as well as the upward mobility experienced and aspired to by families in Santa Rosa, the devotions' perpetuation and enrichment had particular significance. The ability to continue with devotions

was considered an index of a family's continued financial well-being. This was clearly visible in the celebration of feasts, which involved feeding large numbers of people. Meanwhile, those with statues of saints had to spend for the *carrozas*, flowers, the saints' clothes, and, as we have seen, the construction of chapels.

Although, as I have noted, the people of Santa Rosa often described devotions as inheritances, they were in fact unclear about some of the devotions' historical provenance. This was true in the case of the Mahilways' Santísima Trinidad. The family did not know the origins of the devotion, except that their Papá Enso's ancestors had been celebrating it since the Spanish colonial period. The Concepcions too were unaware of how they came to celebrate the San José. Some of the oldest family members that I conversed with simply told me that the obligation to celebrate the feast was 'already there' (*árà na*) when they were born. Whilst the Mahilways' lack of knowledge about the origins of their devotion to the Santísima Trinidad may be attributed to their lack of connection with the Arevalos, the Concepcions' case suggests that remembrances of the intergenerational transmission of devotions are similar to knowledge of genealogical forebears in so far as both tend to be limited (see Carsten 1995c; Dumont 1981a; Geertz & Geertz 1964).

Moreover, the passage of time has led to a reconfiguration and even attenuation of devotions' pious dimensions, and a corresponding increase in the prominence of their social aspects. I was told, for example, how in the past, the novenas that precede feasts of saint were heavily attended. By the time of my fieldwork, only small groups of elderly women would participate in novenas, and in one case, only a woman and her sister would pray—not in the living room as they used to do, but in the privacy of the woman's bedroom. People were more interested in the actual day of celebration, they said. In many ways, religious feasts had become occasions for family reunions and get-togethers with friends and neighbours, and for the performance and validation of class and status.

The pressure to carry on with devotions sometimes led families to incur debts. Here, I am reminded of the Evangelistas, whose fortunes had declined in the years preceding my fieldwork. Whilst the family used to own a large piece of land in Santa Rosa (which the family patriarch purchased in the 1930s using hard-earned money from his small textile distribution venture), it had been parcelled and sold off over the

succeeding decades. The patriarch's daughter was already in her eighties when I met her and had been sickly. Her children, whilst all professionals, had unstable sources of income. At one point, amidst their financial troubles, she considered not celebrating the feast of San José. Yet, upon the advice of Lola Ising, whose opinion she sought, the family did hold the celebration, but only after borrowing money. This was justified in terms of honouring the deceased matriarch's vow, which as I have said, led to the daughter's birth. Virtue was flagged too by the family's willingness to bear (*agwanta*) the cost of the feast, even if it was already facing financial distress.

But, as the Nuñezes' case demonstrates, families may cease to observe devotions. This possibility was conveyed to me partly in generational terms. Each generation, I was told, has its own priorities and preferences, and older generations cannot insist on what their successors should do: a person can only hope that future generations would continue to honour their ancestors' vows. Some of those in-charge of devotions that I spoke to were even unsure as to whom they will pass on their responsibilities, given that younger kin did not seem to be interested in devotional matters.

Precisely because, as I have shown in other chapters, younger generations have had more educational and professional opportunities and achievements than their ascendants, the uncertainty on the part of older villagers over the long-term continuity of the devotions may be seen as indicative of how social mobility has transformed social relations in the village. That is, whilst religious devotions may have been important in the past, including in how villagers sought to become upwardly mobile, and later, to demonstrate success, upward mobility may very well mean their diminished importance and precariousness.

In the meantime, (older) villagers continued to assess the circumstances and reasons of a family whenever a devotion was discontinued. Moral judgments, as well as expressions of apprehension over the possibility of divine punishment (*gábà*) (Jocano 1983: 229-30), were inevitably made in those instances. In the case of the Nuñezes, villagers were puzzled as to why the discontinuation occurred after the eldest son graduated from university, when he would soon be in a position to help with the celebration's expenses. Born on the same day as the feast of San José, the son was a namesake of the saint. It was the coincidence of the two dates that

prompted his mother to start celebrating the feast. In ceasing to observe the devotion, the mother reasoned that she could no longer cope with the chores that came with it. Although I heard muted speculations that the family's subsequent problems were *gàbà* owing to the terminated devotion, those speculations did not gain much traction amongst my interlocutors. I suspect that had the devotion originated from an exchange with the divine (and not a coincidence of dates), the speculations would have reverberated more in Santa Rosa.

Cooking time

For the people I worked with, religion was entangled not just with class and mobility, as I have already discussed, but also kinship. Here, Cannell's (1999: chaps. 8 & 9) description of devotions to saints amongst the Bicolanos is pertinent and could very well apply to my interlocutors. Such devotions, according to her, were ways of maintaining and strengthening kinship ties. Saints themselves and even Christ were related to in familial terms: for example, as children who need to be cared for, and as parents who provide for their devotees (compare Mayblin 2014). In addition, as the material presented so far indicates, there are parallels in so far as the kinship ties and religious devotions of the people of Santa Rosa shared a need to be continuously made and affirmed, and as such, were particularly liable to transformation and ruptures.

More importantly, the stories and lives that I encountered during fieldwork draw attention to how devotions may be sites for the generation of ruptures in kinship ties, their unfolding, and amplification. I have already alluded to how devotions were linked to generational discontinuities. Here, and in the rest of the chapter, I focus on how religious devotions may be entangled with discontinuities in ties amongst siblings. I invoke Lambek (2011), who has written on how the question of succession to spirit mediumship after the passing of a parent-medium led to sibling conflict amongst some of his informants in Mayotte. In his account, siblings competed to succeed their parents, thereby excluding their other siblings; in what follows, we see the reverse: it was when one was given the responsibility of effecting a

devotion, whereas one's other siblings had no or comparatively lighter responsibilities, that triggered and deepened animosities amongst siblings.

Let me now return to the story of the Mahilways. Before long, it was almost March 2015. I had heard Tita Amy swear a number of times that she would not get involved in the feast of San José. I heard too that Tita Monica, who by this time had returned to New York to resume her nursing career, had declared that she would not send money to pay for the celebration's expenses, as she had born the bulk of Lola Ising's hospital and funeral expenses.

'Our hands are already up! Actually even our feet are,' Tita Amy said, referring to the popular gesture for surrendering. 'Your Tita Monica and I have taken the burden for far too long. Now, it's their turn. Let's see if they'll deliver.'

The burden that Tita Amy referred to included both the financing of the celebration (which was particularly pertinent in the case of Tita Monica whose job in New York meant that she was almost never around for the feast) and the actual labour required by the event: cleaning the house; washing and replacing the curtains and cushion covers; buying the ingredients and cooking the food; inviting and attending to guests; and putting the house back to order once the guests had left.

Given her culinary skills and the fact that she lived in the family compound, Tita Amy's main contribution to their family's celebrations, religious and otherwise, took the form of spending for and cooking food. This was certainly not an easy contribution to make, for the celebrations require the cooking of a considerable number of dishes—enough to feed at least 60 people. There would be pressure in fact to prepare enough food, for in Iloilo, as is the case elsewhere in the Philippines and in many other parts of the world, running out of food before everyone has eaten is indicative of inhospitableness, and even hardship on the part of the hosts. Although she would often be assisted by others, including her children and visiting nephews and cousins, the overall responsibility for the food was Tita Amy's.

In the case of the feast of San José, thirteen dishes must be prepared. On the day of the feast, assigned individuals dress up and act as St Joseph, the Virgin Mary, and the Child Jesus. Amongst the Mahilways, the individuals chosen are often

members of the family; however, in other parts of Iloilo, these appear to be chosen from poorer relations and neighbours.² Moreover, the family was particularly proud of how their celebration differed from those of others, where the three figures would sit on a table and be fed. In their celebration, St Joseph would lie down on a bed placed in the middle of the main house's living room; the Virgin Mary would attend to her husband, and would feed him until his death; and the Child Jesus would bring in one dish at a time from the adjacent dining area. When St Joseph is fed the thirteenth dish, he would then expire, and at this point those present inside the house would form a line to kiss or press to their foreheads the hands of the saints (*besa*). It is also customary for everyone to place bills of money on a dedicated plate—the money would be distributed amongst those who played the role of the saints. After everyone has paid their respects to the saints, the family would invite them to the dining area where serving trays of food would be spread, and like a buffet, guests would be free to take as much food as they wished.

Tita Amy's decision not to be involved in the preparations meant that unlike in the past, when her siblings would usually arrive with the food already sorted out, they had to either cook the food themselves or hire a caterer. In the previous year, when the family celebrated the feast of the Santísima Trinidad, Tita Amy sought the services of a caterer so that she would not have to cook the bulk of the dishes. Getting a caterer, of course, was more expensive than if she had cooked everything herself.

When Tita Amy said that 'it's their turn,' she was referring to her other siblings, particularly the first three: Tita Mila, Tita Dolor and Tita Remy. To recall the scene that I sketched at the beginning of this thesis, when the three sisters, one of their cousins, and I were one time inside Lola Ising's ICU suite, the siblings promised their mother that they would celebrate the feast of San José. There would also be musicians and a choir, just like in the past, before the family opted to rely on a recording of songs. Although unable to speak, Lola Ising signified her agreement by nodding weakly.

As I have described in earlier chapters, parents' and other older kin's words, preferences, and decisions were experienced as particularly forceful in the past. This

² See previous note.

was true amongst the Mahilway siblings and their generational contemporaries and predecessors. Moreover, promises given to people on the brink of death were thought of in Santa Rosa to be particularly grave. Much like abandoning promises to the divine, as well as disobeying parents and older kin, breaking promises to the dying may give rise to hardship, illness, and other misfortune. Equally worrisome for people is the possibility that the promisee might come back from the dead to haunt the one who promised. Such a possibility, of course, stemmed from the widely shared view in the Catholic Philippines of the permeability of the boundary between the living and the dead (Cannell 1999; Jocano 1983). Thus, those who make promises to a dying person would do everything to make sure that they kept their word. It was precisely this view of promises and filial obedience that underpinned Tita Amy's statement that it was her siblings' turn.

Beyond the ritual context of saintly devotions, Tita Amy's responsibilities in the family extended into the everyday. During ordinary days, she would cook meals for at least a dozen individuals. These individuals included all of the residents of the compound and the workers at the water refilling station, with the exception of her brother's former wife, who cooked and ate separately. Sometimes there would be more mouths to feed, such as when there were visitors, including anthropologists. Although the house help would buy and prepare the ingredients, the actual cooking was Tita Amy's responsibility.

'Her job is to cook, and ours is to eat,' was how Tita Dolor described to me jestingly—but with a tinge of truth—the division of labour that connected houses in the family's compound. During my time in the field, Tita Amy would cook the food in her kitchen: at first, in the tree house (a one-room structure made of bamboo slats and wood attached to a mature mango tree in the yard and elevated on stilts), then behind the family's old house, and later, beside the water refilling station. At each mealtime, she would have platters of food brought into the main house's dining area for Tita Dolor, Lola Ising, the house help, and visitors, if any. The rest would eat in the improvised dining area beneath the tree house. When I first came to know the Mahilways, they would invite me to have lunch or snacks in the main house; later, as I became a regular presence in the compound, I would often join Tita Amy and the others beneath the tree house.

For Tita Amy, cooking instantiated a continuity with her childhood and the family's past. As I discussed in Chapter 2, their household then was quite large, and included several cousins, uncles, grandparents, and farm hands. This meant, of course, that the volume of food cooked every day was also considerable. Thus, once they were old enough, the siblings—especially the daughters—were expected to help in the kitchen. Moreover, Tita Amy told me that her father, Lolo Minong, always insisted that they cook more than what was required in case there would be unexpected visitors. He, in fact, would often invite passers-by, including neighbours and itinerant vendors, to join the household for a meal. Although Tita Amy and her siblings considered their father's habit as indicative of generosity and charitableness, it was also expressive of the family's better standing relative to most of their neighbours (see Chapter 1).

And so, during their childhood, Tita Amy and her siblings developed a taste for cooking and eating. Sometimes, whilst still eating breakfast or lunch, they would already discuss what to eat for snacks or the next meal, much to the displeasure of their disciplinarian uncle, Lolo Pabling. From time to time, they would secretly gather corn, sweet potatoes, or peanuts and boil them for their snacks, only harvesting from the plants in the middle of the field—thus making it appear from the outside that the crops had not been touched. In telling this story, the siblings often laughed, making clear their amusement at having outsmarted their elders.

During my time in Santa Rosa, slow afternoons would often be enlivened by Tita Amy who would ask me and the others, 'What do you want to eat? Let's cook.' When her siblings and some of the Mahilway grandchildren came home to attend to Lola Ising in the hospital, Tita Amy would always cook family favourites and classic Ilonggo dishes, including steamed rice cakes (*puto*), pork dumpling soup (*pancit Molo*), chopseuy, and candied young coconut meat (*bukáryô*). As she described to me with some measure of exaggeration, whenever members of the family come home, 'there's no turning off the stove.'

Every now and then, such as on birthdays or anniversaries, Tita Amy would send her kin residing outside of Santa Rosa packs of food that she had cooked. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that she sent food to her estranged brother, Tito Celso, on his birthday in an attempt to mend relations with him. Similarly, when a

visiting relative or friend was set to go home, Tita Amy would gift them packs of food.

Her skills in cooking provided Tita Amy with a modest source of income, just like many other women in Santa Rosa (see Introduction). During my fieldwork, she would accept from neighbours orders for puto and pancit Molo. The village head, for example, regularly placed orders for *puto*. This was his contribution to the regular meetings of the city's village heads with the mayor and other officials. When the city mayor posted on his Facebook page pictures from one of the meetings, Tita Amy scrutinised them, and was delighted to see the attendees eating her *putos*.

In the early 2000s, Tita Amy ran the canteen of one of the city's Catholic colleges. Every day, she would cook snacks and meals, and bake cakes and pastries, for the college's students and teachers. As the canteen had a captive clientele, it was highly profitable and allowed Tita Amy to send her younger children to private schools. Tita Amy, however, eventually had to give it up to concentrate on the farm and the water refilling station, and to take care of older kin, an issue that I will turn to shortly.

When I left Santa Rosa, Tita Amy was considering applying for a government permit that would allow her to sell *bukáryòs* in the city's souvenir centre that is strategically located on the way to the airport. Because of the increased flows of tourists and migrants, having a space in the souvenir centre seemed to her to be a sound venture. She was also considering putting up a restaurant along the riverine edge of the family's compound. As I described in the Introduction, the city government was planning to extend the river esplanade into Santa Rosa and adjacent villages. Tita Amy hoped that, should the plan materialise, she would be able to cash in on the increased foot traffic. Yet, because of issues in government funding, the esplanade's extension—and Tita Amy's plan—were put on hold.

A biography of caring

Inasmuch as Tita Amy cooked for others, she was considered as caring for them; as a culinary expert she was seen as a particularly good carer. In Iloilo, to care for

someone requires more than just feeding that person; it implies being attentive to that person's needs, and taking time and effort in doing so. Yet, at least amongst the families that I came to know of, feeding someone on a daily basis and for an extended period of time was an ample demonstration of care. This is particularly true when the person being fed is dependent on the one who provides the food, such as a child or an ailing elder. Indeed, in Hiligaynon, one of the words that pertain to the act of caring for and looking after a person, *sagúd*, is also used when referring to acts of attending to, feeding, or watering animals, plants, and fields (Kaufmann 1900).

A recurring joke that I heard several times amongst the Mahilways was that Tita Amy should put up not just a restaurant, but also a care home, and these two should be built beside each other. This was because she looked after their parents and a number of elderly kin until their demise. Caring for the elderly was supposedly Tita Amy's other speciality aside from cooking.

Narrations of Tita Amy's biography, including her own, were in fact marked by the names of those she cared for. In contrast, as the previous chapters demonstrate, those of her siblings were full of the various places they have been for work. These names included those of her maternal grandmother, her maternal uncle Lolo José, her father, her mother-in-law, and a paternal uncle—all deceased. When I first met her in 2014, she was looking after her husband's aunt, who was recovering from recent hip replacement surgery. Lola Ising, whilst still strong prior to her hospitalisation, was considered as being under Tita Amy's everyday care. Tita Dolor, too, who whilst not impaired, had had a stroke several years before my arrival; and besides, as she herself claimed, she did not know how to cook.

Before proceeding, I should emphasise that Tita Amy's biography, much like her sister Tita Monica's (see Chapter 4), was one that I came to know only slowly and piece by piece. As I have described earlier in the thesis, my initial conversations with the family focussed on their educational and professional achievements, and most of these conversations were with Lola Ising and Tita Dolor. Whilst Tita Amy would join us every now and then, she would often be in the kitchen. Notably, despite the initial conversations' focus on achievements, aspects of Tita Amy's biography came to the fore, for example, whenever I would ask about the history of the family's houses and farmland, and whenever I would comment on how delicious the food was. I began to

learn more about her life when I started joining her and her husband on their trips to the farm, but much more so when I spent more time with the Mahilways in the wake of Lola Ising's illness and subsequent death. It was during this time that Tita Amy spoke of her refusal to cook for the feast of San José, for instance, or of how she ended up as the carer in the family (see below). Often, her accounts took place at night, after dinner, when she was finally done with her chores for the day.

At the outset, however, it was clear to me that one way in which Tita Amy's biography of caring was told and recognised within the family was through the designation of the family's old house as her inheritance. Even before Lola Ising's death, it was already used by her and her family, although, as will become clear below, they did not actually sleep there. Built in the 1960s, the house's ground floor was made of concrete and had three small rooms, along with a receiving and dining area, and toilet rooms. Two of the rooms were used to store the family's old items, whilst the other was used by the aunt of Tito Ruel, Tita Amy's husband. The first floor, made of wood, had three rooms too, as well as a spacious lounge where the old family altar was kept. It was not occupied as parts of the floor had large holes and gaps through which a person could easily fall. In the past, when the house was in better condition, Tita Amy rented out some of the rooms to students and workers from outside of the city. Some of the rooms too were used by the workers in the water refilling station.

Additionally, as I have already described in Chapter 1, Tita Amy received the right to till the family's rice farmland. The income from the farm was hers alone, and her siblings did not seek to till the land. It was only when her brother Tito Celso stayed for some time in Iloilo in the mid 1990s that she yielded control over the farmland. Tita Amy's practically exclusive use of the farmland was, according to her mother and siblings, in recognition of how her responsibilities as a carer constrained her pursuit of livelihood. Aside from being generally confined to the house, an issue that I will elaborate in the next section, she also provided for the everyday needs of those who were under her care. Notably, it was only Tita Monica amongst the other siblings who helped Tita Amy with Lola Ising's and Tita Dolor's expenses.

What Tita Amy's inheritance of the old house and her almost exclusive use of the farmland bring to the fore is how caring expectations and arrangements are

embedded in relations and their histories. Such an embeddedness is particularly clear in relations between parents and their children. Earlier in the thesis, we have seen how parents strove to secure a better future for their children. Children were deemed to complete their parents, confer on them full adulthood, and enable redemption from histories of marginality. Here, I add that amongst those I worked with, children were expected to repay their parents by providing for and looking after them in old age. In fact, even in cases where parents were considered to have been irresponsible or as having abandoned their children, the latter continued to be expected to help them when they became old. This was because children were seen as owing their lives to their parents. Meanwhile, children who ended up looking after their parents, such as Tita Amy, were often assured of their inheritance. Given the relative newness in Santa Rosa of land as something that may be passed on, such inheritance often took the form of the parental house.

My interlocutors' views and experiences accord well with the existing literature on Filipino children and their elderly parents. Previous discussions highlight the centrality of ties of reciprocity and debts of gratitude in structuring obligations and practices of care for elderly parents (see R.C. Bulatao 1975; Domingo & Asis 1995; Natividad 2000). As I have discussed in the Introduction, reciprocity and debts of gratitude have been central to anthropological theorising of lowland Philippine sociality and personhood. Failure to reciprocate and repay such debts often imply the unravelling of ties and a diminished personhood in the eyes of others. Thus, in Santa Rosa, a person who refuses to care for their parents (or relatives who helped raise them when they were children) would usually be described as lacking respect (*walâ pagtahâ*), shameless (*patáy huyâ*), and an ingrate (*walâ kabalaslan*) (Jocano 1983: 224-28) (see also J.C. Bulatao 1964; Hollnsteiner 1973 [1962]; Kaut 1961; Lynch 1973a [1962]).

Crucially, however, Tita Amy's situation suggests that caring obligations and arrangements may exceed specific dyadic ties, such as between a parent and their child, or an aunt/uncle and a niece/nephew they cared for as a child. Relations imply other relations; one relation may be in the shadow of another; or a blockage in one relation may generate pressures in another (see Han 2012). Thus, in the same way that cooking and religious devotions were threads of continuity for Tita Amy, caring obligations too bound her to the past. Here, Lola Ising's history of taking in kin

becomes pertinent. To recall this history, which I sketched in Chapter 2, Lola Ising fostered two sets of her siblings' children, and a fair number of her siblings' grandchildren. Later, she also shared with Tita Amy the responsibility of looking after her mother (Tita Amy's grandmother) and her husband's brother, Lolo Pabling.

When I arrived in Santa Rosa, this history was on-going. Months earlier, Lola Ising's husband's brother's son (Tita Amy and her siblings' first cousin), Tito Manuel, turned up and asked to be taken in. Already in his sixties, Tito Manuel was limping and could barely move his left arm, having previously suffered a stroke. His children drove him out after he paid no heed to their repeated pleas that in view of his health, he should stop smoking, gambling, and staying out late. This episode was the most recent chapter in a long-standing conflict between Tito Manuel and his children. He was, I was told, a distant father to his children and did not provide for them when they were growing up. With no qualms, Lola Ising took him in, and justified this by saying that if Lolo Minong did not complain when her numerous nephews and nieces came to live with them, then taking in her husband's nephew should not be a problem for her. Although Tita Amy initially objected, she eventually opted to obey her mother's wishes—even if this meant that it in practice, it would be her who would provide for Tito Manuel's daily needs.

Additionally, stories of how Lola Ising would welcome older, poorer neighbours to their house, feed them, clothe them, and sometimes even bathe them were often narrated to me by Tita Amy and her siblings, both before and after her demise. There were times when Lola Ising would secretly fill plastic bags with rice and give these to their hard-up neighbours, much to the dismay of Tita Amy who would notice how their granary would be emptied of its contents much faster than expected. Of course, these stories, like the stories about Lolo Minong discussed above, were as much about generosity and charitableness as status and class. Indeed, there was palpable pride in the voices of the siblings whenever they recounted these stories.

These stories likewise served to portray Tita Amy's biography of caring as unsurprising. Tita Mila and Tita Dolor, for instance, often spoke of this biography as their younger sister's inheritance from their mother. Tita Amy herself often made the link between her life and that of her mother. In the same way that her mother cared

for kin, she bore the responsibility of looking after older relatives. ‘Maybe it’s my fate (*kapalaran* or *swerte*),’ she told me a number of times. As has been pointed out, *swerte* and *kapalaran* index a view that sees life, whilst amenable to a person’s efforts, as ultimately shaped by more powerful others (Aguilar 1998).

Similar to how, as I described above, families who continued with their vows were celebrated as virtuous, these stories presented those who cared for kin, especially older ones, as paragons of goodness. In this vein, Lola Ising was depicted as someone who never stopped being charitable despite her advanced age, whilst Tita Amy was often portrayed as someone who remained dutiful and obedient notwithstanding the negative consequences of doing so, a theme that I turn to below. What I wish to highlight for now is how Tita Amy often invoked her mother’s exhortations. ‘Don’t mind it. Just persevere. God’s grace is everywhere,’ was what Lola Ising would tell Tita Amy whenever the latter expressed unhappiness over her situation.

What emerges here is that in addition to being inflected by gender and birth order, an issue that I discuss in the next section, care responsibilities were tinged with Catholic notions of suffering and perseverance. At the start of this section, I alluded to how relations of care may create a hierarchy between giver and receiver. Here, we see that the elevation of the provider of care may result not simply because of the receiver’s dependence, but also because of the provider’s suffering and tenacity. Notably, as I discussed in Chapter 2, notions of suffering and perseverance also informed educational pursuits, as well as relations between parents and children.

Tita Amy’s reputation and virtues as a carer led some of her relatives—such as their cousin Tita Betty (Tito Manuel’s sister)—to express their desire that they be cared for by her in their old age. Already in her late 60s, Tita Betty would spend a few months each year in California, where she had been renting out the house built for her by her deceased husband, who was employed in the US Navy. She would spend the rest of the year in Iloilo. Whenever in the city, she would shuttle between her house in San Nicolas, the village across the river from Santa Rosa, and her niece’s in one of the city’s new gated developments. She shared the house in San Nicolas with her brother-in-law (her late sister’s husband and her niece’s father) and some of his children. As her husband died in the late 1960s before they could have a

child, Tita Betty doted on her sister's children. She spent on their education (and in some cases, those of their children; her sister was notorious for being loose with money, and her brother-in-law did not earn much as an office employee) and shouldered the bulk of the cost of the house in San Nicolas.

Yet, Tita Betty preferred the company of her cousins in Santa Rosa. In part, this preference reflected the strength of cousin ties in their generation (see Chapter 7), but also signalled the fraying of ties between Tita Betty and her sister's children. Whenever she was in San Nicolas, she would cross the bridge to the Mahilways' house almost every day. She would spend hours chatting with her cousins over *merienda* (snacks). She also made it known that she intended to eventually live with Tita Amy. With the exception of the niece whose house she regularly shuttled to, her sister's children apparently either disliked her or did not wish to be burdened with looking after her. This was even though she financed their education, and despite her continuing to receive her deceased husband's pension. 'They're ingrates. They just wanted her money, and now that she's old, they don't want to be responsible for her,' her cousins told me. Faced with what appeared to be the ingratitude of her nieces and nephews, Tita Betty had to make arrangements to secure her future. Tita Amy would have to care for her.

Disconnected dreams

In hindsight, as a woman and as the second-to-youngest of the siblings, Tita Amy's designation as carer seemed highly likely. Particularly in the agrarian past, but even in the Santa Rosa of my fieldwork, everyday cooking and caring were activities often, but not exclusively, assigned to women. Men, as I described more fully in Chapter 5, would usually spend significant amounts of time outside the house, both for productive and social activities. Whilst women were not constrained from leaving the house, more often than not they stayed close to home. Moreover, even in cases where women were gainfully employed as professionals, the expectation was that they would attend—either directly or through the labour of a kin or a hired help—to the

affairs of the house. By and large, men were considered less reliable in domestic affairs.

These gendered expectations were intertwined with birth order. I mentioned in another chapter how youngest siblings were often doted upon. In exchange for this privileged position, the youngest sibling is often expected to care for their aged parents. In the case of a fairly large sibling set, such as the Mahilways, by the time the parents need to be cared for, the older siblings would most likely already have their own families, and might thus have limited ability to take on the responsibility. The younger siblings—probably still single, or just about to start their families—would be in a better position to care for their parents. This was certainly true in Tita Amy's case, albeit complicated further by her own marital and professional trajectories, and their youngest sibling's migratory moves (see Chapter 4).

After graduating from university with a pre-medicine degree in the late 1970s, Tita Amy worked as a telephone operator for what was then the Philippines' telecommunications monopoly. Although she was originally assigned to the company's Iloilo branch, she eventually moved to Bacolod when her sister Tita Olive was also employed by the company. An internal rule prohibited them from working in the same unit.

Tita Amy's stint as a telephone operator was the only time that she was formally employed. Previously, she had attempted to find a job in Manila, as Iloilo's economy was lethargic in the decades following the war and there were very few jobs to be had (see Chapter 2). She was discouraged, however, by her brother Tito Benjie, who at that point was already working for a manufacturing firm in Manila. I was told that whilst there were more jobs in the national capital, Tito Benjie thought that life there was too difficult for her, and that she would be better off if she stayed in Iloilo. Besides, he was concerned that in the long run, there should be someone left with their parents and other older relatives.

When Tita Amy returned to Iloilo, she found a job as a switchboard operator connecting long-distance calls, thanks to the intervention of Lucing, their second cousin, who had been working at the telecommunications company. I should stress that whilst a job as an operator might appear today as anachronistic and not particularly glamorous, in the context of Iloilo in the early 1980s, such a job was

considered highly desirable. It had perceptions of stability owing to the company's monopoly on the industry (see L.C. Salazar 2007 for an historical overview), and the company was known for the relative generosity of its salaries and benefits. There were also not many alternative sources of employment aside from banks, local shops, and the local government.

Eventually, Tita Amy quit her job after she got married to Tito Ruel—who was then on active duty in the army—and gave birth to their first two children, Chris and Jenny, who were born one year apart. Tito Ruel was often away, and they did not have a nanny to take care of the children, and so Tita Amy opted to be a full-time housewife. By this time, almost all the Mahilway siblings had already left Santa Rosa for jobs outside of Iloilo. Of the other siblings, only Tita Olive remained in the village, but as I have mentioned, she too was already working.

Tita Amy and her family lived in a small house (or more accurately, a big hut) by the river, on her maternal uncle's lot, several hundred metres away from the Mahilways' compound. Having one's own house, no matter how close to the parental house, of course, was a crucial means for a married child to achieve autonomy from their family of birth. Yet, several years after moving out of the family compound, Tita Amy came back to live in the compound, this time with a husband and children. One day, after returning from a trip to the market, Tita Amy discovered that the belongings in their house had been moved to her natal family's old house (at that time still the main house), upon her other brother Tito Celso's orchestration. At that time, Tito Celso, who was already working as a banker (see Chapter 5), was preparing to get married and move out of the family house. Echoing Tito Benjie, he did not want their parents and older kin to be left by themselves. 'They really wanted me here,' said Tita Amy one time whilst shaking her head.

Although most of those she attended to were paternal or maternal kin, being a wife compounded Tita Amy's responsibilities. In addition to becoming a full-time housewife, marriage eventually meant that she had to take in her mother-in-law, who became bedridden for several years, at the same time that she was caring for her maternal uncle. Like Tita Amy's siblings, Tito Ruel's had moved outside of Iloilo for work and marriage. Whilst he eventually took early retirement so that he could help look after his mother, it was Tita Amy who bore the brunt of her mother-in-law's

everyday needs. In fact, his retirement meant that Tita Amy's income from the farm and cooking ventures, as well as the water station, became more critical for the household. Nearly two decades later, a similar situation arose when the couple took responsibility for Tito Ruel's aunt whose daughter had emigrated to the US. Thus, even if Tita Amy often spoke of her husband positively as someone who supported her unconditionally in her familial obligations, it is possible to read his support as stemming from economic dependence, and also as a tacit recognition of his complicity in exacerbating his wife's duties.

Often, Tita Amy's accounts regarding her staying in Santa Rosa were tinged with regret. I remember how, in one of those instances when I joined her and Tito Ruel in the farm, we discussed how her daughter Jenny ended up working as a nurse in England. After narrating Jenny's journey, Tita Amy remarked that had she not assumed the role of carer within the family, she probably would have also ended up working abroad. Jenny had also been inviting her to come to England for a holiday, to which Tita Amy replied: 'as long as your Lola Ising is alive, I cannot leave the house for a prolonged period.'

Indeed, one obvious consequence of Tita Amy's responsibilities was her restricted mobility. I already referred to how I initially had limited conversations with her as she was in the kitchen most of the time. More generally, she hardly left the family compound. Rare exceptions included short trips to the supermarket and the mall. Notably, whenever she would leave the house, it would not take long before a household member would look for her. Exasperated, Tita Amy remarked: 'it's as if I have the pots and pans with me.'

It appeared to me that Tita Amy's regret was informed by a sense of the incommensurability between her duties as a carer (including the opportunities she had to forego) and the recognition and compensation that she received from her siblings. The old house, as I pointed out, was already run down. In fact, when the new house was about to be built in the 1990s, the plan was to demolish the old house and build the new one in its place. Had it not been for Lola Ising's vehement disapproval, the old house would not have survived to be passed on to Tita Amy.

The farm, on the other hand, had become less profitable through the years. This outcome was attributed by Tita Amy to several factors, including how she and

Tito Ruel had not been as hands-on with the farm as before, given their responsibilities at home and the water refilling station. She had had to rely on cousins and other relatives on her mother's side, (see Chapter 2). Frequent typhoons and bouts of El Niño and La Niña likewise adversely affected harvests. More immediately, as discussed in Chapter 1, Tita Amy pawned half of the farmland to pay for a portion of Lola Ising's hospital and funeral expenses, thus reducing her own income. Meanwhile, the conversion of the surrounding areas to a residential development signalled to Tita Amy the coming end of rice farming in the area. The construction of houses and the influx of new residents meant, among other things, an increase in the area's population of rats—something that would most likely reduce further the farm's income.

At times, to underscore their weight, Tita Amy spoke of her duties in terms of looking after kin during moments of illness and death. During such moments, she would often bemoan how, because of the absence of her siblings, she felt alone and had no one to share the burden of care with. She was particularly concerned about being blamed should a person under her care become sick or unexpectedly pass away. She likewise hesitated to make crucial decisions pertaining to medical care, such as whether to issue 'do not resuscitate' orders. Thus, when Lola Ising was hospitalised, she was adamant that her siblings come home immediately. 'We are nine, you know? I can't decide for all of them,' she lamented. As we will see below, the solitariness in relation to most of her siblings with which she experienced her duties as carer sometimes manifested itself through powerful and haunting memories of those who she had cared for and who had died.

Perhaps inevitably, Tita Amy's duties meant that her sons Mark and Echo, both university students at that time, were roped into helping her fulfil these. Mark, as the designated driver in the family, bore a disproportionate share. In addition to driving the water refilling station's delivery van whenever he had no classes, he would also often be asked by Tita Amy to bring her to the farm or to the supermarket; in many cases, he would run errands for his mother. It would also be his responsibility whenever someone needed to be brought to the doctor or the hospital.

Echo, whilst less involved due to a history of sickliness, also shared in some of his mother's responsibilities. Thus, when Lola Ising was in the hospital, he was in

charge of buying his grandmother's medicines and daily supplies. Along with his cousin Patrick, he also almost always slept each night in the hospital to watch over their grandmother.

There were consequences for the two sons' studies. Their involvement, to begin with, meant that they had less time for reading and preparing for classes. Although it is arguable that even if they had not helped with their mother's duties, they would not necessarily have become diligent students—indeed, they were not particularly studious, for they preferred tinkering with motorcycles and car engines (in Mark's case) and playing computer games (in Echo's)—it is also true that helping their mother excused them from expectations of academic excellence.

More importantly, Tita Amy's ability to provide for her sons' education was constrained. After I returned to Edinburgh in the spring of 2015, there were instances when Echo would tell me via Facebook that classes had been going on for a week, but he had been unable to attend them, as his university fees remained unpaid. At that time, Tita Amy was still paying for part of Lola Ising's hospital expenses. In Mark's case, he had had to go part-time a couple of years before my fieldwork after Tita Amy bore the cost of Tita Dolor's hospitalisation following a stroke.

There were signs too that Tita Amy had been neglecting herself. One day, she mentioned to me out of the blue that she had been unable to have her dentures fixed. This made her ill at ease to smile at people, particularly those she transacted business with, or to smile at the camera. Just as quickly, she justified the state of her dentures by invoking the needs of those she was responsible for.

As the broken dentures signal, becoming a fulltime housewife, carer, cook, and farm manager meant that Tita Amy was markedly less inclined to sophistication as compared to other (that is, professional) women, including her sisters. As someone who rarely ventured out of the house, she was not particularly inclined to dress well—often she would just wear sun dresses (*daster*), shirts, and shorts or jeans. She was not fond of make-up, jewellery, or leather bags and shoes. In an Iloilo marked by new real estate developments and other markers of progress, Tita Amy increasingly embodied the past and a difficulty to keep pace with life, the consequences of which were passed on to her children.

Avoiding the house

If care obligations were, as we have seen, spoken of as Tita Amy's *swerte* or *kapalaran*, and if one's *swerte* is considered in Iloilo as potentially changeable notwithstanding the determinations of fate, then we may ask how Tita Amy sought to transform hers. Resonating with how Lolo Minong and Lola Ising redeemed their lack of education through their children (see Chapter 2), Tita Amy drew vindication from her children. Her eldest, Chris, was working as a merchant seaman, whilst her daughter, Jenny, was working as a nurse in England. Mark and Echo, as I have indicated, were still in university. Like their older siblings, they were bound to pursue professions overseas: Mark as an engineer and Echo as a radiographer.

Jenny, in particular, was a favourite topic. In contrast with Jenny's contemporaries in the nursing profession who faced difficulties in finding jobs abroad (see Chapter 4), she was able to find employment in the UK easily, and did not have to pay substantial placement fees. Neither did she have to enter the UK on a student visa, which many Filipino nurses and carers apparently did. Moreover, after only a couple of years in England, Jenny was promoted by the hospital to become a preceptor nurse owing to her skills and dedication, much to the envy of her Filipino colleagues who had been working in the hospital for far longer.

It was Jenny who urged her mother to be mindful of their own family's needs, particularly those of her two younger brothers. 'What you've done is more than enough,' Tita Amy one time quoted her daughter as saying. 'You need to take care of yourself and make sure that the two finish university,' Jenny said in reference to her two younger brothers.

I do not know when Tita Amy was first admonished by Jenny, but the first time I heard of it was in September, a month before Lola Ising fell ill. By January, after the funeral and after her siblings had resumed their lives, Tita Amy appeared to have taken steps to heed her daughter. In particular, she made it a point not to go back inside the main house, except to attend the nightly prayers for the dead (which lasted until mid-January) and when we, those who were left in Santa Rosa, celebrated Lola Ising's birthday in February.

The main house was saturated with memories of Lola Ising. This was how Tita Amy explained her decision to me and to friends and neighbours. Like quick flashes of lightning, Tita Amy would recall her mother doing her usual activities: napping on the rocking chair in the porch; entering—without knocking on the door of—Tita Amy's and Tito Ruel's room to check on them in the middle of the night; placing more food on the plate of a grandchild or a visitor; handwashing the laundry at the sink at the back of the house; and feeding the three stray white cats that she had taken in. To avoid confronting these memories, Tita Amy chose to avoid the house.

Those who came to know of Tita Amy's decision often expressed sympathy for her predicament and affirmed the rightness of her action. Several times, I was asked by some of my other interlocutors in Santa Rosa how she was doing, and if she had already moved back to the main house. Whenever I would tell them that she still stayed in the tree house, they would often nod their head to express that they understood her action, or would even say something to the effect that such was to be expected.

Aside from refusing to enter the main house, Tita Amy likewise refrained from actively looking after the remaining residents of that house, Tita Dolor and Tito Manuel. In the former's case, although she had been warned by doctors not to exert too much effort, she persisted in working the garden, even when it was extremely hot. Prior to Lola Ising's death, Tita Amy would reprimand her older sister for not being mindful enough of her own health. At this time, however, she chose to let Tita Dolor do whatever she wanted. Not going inside the main house also led to Tita Amy becoming less conscious of her sister's material needs: sometimes days would pass before an empty can of milk or bottle of juice would be replaced.

Similarly, Tita Amy chose to ignore her cousin Tito Manuel's predilection for vice and coming home late at night. She also turned a deaf ear to talk that he had been womanising. For Tita Amy, to continue caring for her cousin was a delicate issue. She suspected that her mother's initial cardiac arrest was a consequence of overwork, as Lola Ising had handwashed Tito Manuel's clothes the day before the cardiac arrest occurred. Not wanting her siblings to blame their cousin, Tita Amy

kept her suspicions to herself, but at the same time, minimised interactions with Tito Manuel.

Several weeks had passed after she made it a point to avoid going inside the main house, when Tita Amy started to become sick. Every late afternoon, she would feel weak and feverish, and this prompted her to consult a healer living nearby. It was Lola Ising who was making her ill, said the healer. Tita Amy's lack of active care for Tita Dolor displeased their mother. Still, Tita Amy remained defiant. 'They're old enough to look after themselves,' I overheard her say one morning to a visiting neighbour. Along with Tito Ruel, she continued to stay in the tree house.

In some ways, Tita Amy's resolute refusal to go back to the main house gained her some relief from her other siblings. Tita Remy extended her stay in Santa Rosa after the end of the period for the prayers of the dead, and even after she returned to Bacolod, she came back to the village several times to look after their sister, Tita Dolor. Tita Mila likewise started to help provide for Tito Manuel's needs by giving him an allowance each week. She too took on the role of chiding him for his vices.

At the same time, Tita Amy continued to cook for Tita Dolor and Tito Manuel. The house help would bring the food inside the main house for each meal time, as she used to do. She would also clean the house and do the laundry of its occupants. At night, the house help would sleep in the old house, whilst Mark and Echo (and myself, whenever I would spend the night in Santa Rosa) would stay in Tita Monica's room, right beside Tita Dolor's. Although the three of us, particularly the two brothers, had very limited interactions with Tita Dolor—we would often go inside the house late at night, past her bed time—by sleeping in the main house, we were considered to be keeping her company. Should an emergency arise, she could call on us. In a way, this arrangement allowed Tita Amy to maintain her distance from her sister.

I now come back to the feast of San José. It was amidst the incremental shifts in the care arrangements within the family that Tita Amy's refusal to cook for the feast occurred. Her three oldest sisters did manage to put together money for the catering expenses. Their brother Tito Benjie sent money for the purchase of a pig for

roasting; a maternal cousin's widow promised to cook *valenciana* (a sticky rice dish; from the Spanish *arroz a la valenciana*).

Tita Amy discovered, however, that the caterer had recently increased its prices; the money raised by her sisters was insufficient. With the feast approaching and with no time to raise more money, Tita Amy reversed her earlier vow not to cook. A week before the celebration, she started buying ingredients for the feast. She made it a point to pre- or partly cook one dish per day. It was more manageable and less stressful to heat frozen dishes and to finish cooking partially prepared dishes on the day of the feast, than cooking everything starting the night before, she said. She was proud of her achievement: not only did she save some of her sisters' money by cooking most of the dishes, but she did so without overstretching herself.

During the feast itself, Tita Amy went inside the main house to help set the spread and to entertain the guests—neighbours, Lola Ising's old friends, teachers from the nearby school, village officials, cousins and other relatives. Once more, the family's eminent position in Santa Rosa was affirmed. Like everyone else, Tita Amy kissed the hands of the saints. After lunch, she stayed in the main house's porch to chat with kin and visitors. At the end of the day, however, when everyone had left, she went back to the tree house.

Conclusion

Promises and obligations bind the future to the present and the past. In the stories that I have considered here, these also bring together persons—both in the sense of a person's present or past action requiring another's response in the future, and that of a person's promises and obligations (and history of relations, more generally) casting a shadow on another's. Perhaps because individuals are always already within multiple relations, the binding power of promises and obligations exceeds the original context within which such commitments are made. As I have demonstrated, vows may come to bind even those who are decades, even generations, apart.

Seen from the vantage point of siblingship, the binding force of promises and obligations may be felt unequally. Here, the lottery of birth has implications for the

sort of commitments one gets to face or inherit. Being a woman and a younger sibling, as we have seen, had grave consequences as to the kind and weight of the familial responsibilities bestowed upon Tita Amy. Such responsibilities, in fact, implicated Tita Amy's children and her ability to attend to their needs.

The burdens that Tita Amy had to bear figured as forces of immobility: such responsibilities bound her to Santa Rosa, and to the house in particular. Her immobility, however, was the predicate on which her siblings' own mobility depended. Without her staying in Santa Rosa, the responsibility to care for their mother and other older kin would have been another sibling's. Her staying in the village likewise enabled the perpetuation of the family's traditions and its reputation as a middle-class family.

In the face of unequal responsibilities and their immobilising consequences, it is notable that Tita Amy chose to voice her dissatisfaction, as well as a desire for a less oppressive arrangement, using the language of immobility itself: refraining from going to the main house, refusing to cook for the feast, and not minding her sister and her cousin. By doing so, she brought attention to her plight, elicited sympathy from neighbours and kin alike, and indeed, set into motion a redistribution of obligations amongst her siblings. Immobility may thus indicate not only limited or circumscribed agency, but may even be a potential source of power (Cannell 1999: 74).

It is significant too that alongside, and after voicing, her dissatisfaction, Tita Amy continued to cook for the family, both for everyday meals and the feast of San José. At once a recognition of the continued significance of kinship ties and an acknowledgment of her siblings' responses to her dissatisfaction, Tita Amy's culinary persistence signalled an openness to the possibility that things would turn out for the better.

Indeed, it is not accidental that Tita Amy's bid for a redistribution of responsibilities within the family occurred after Lola Ising's death, which here appears to prefigure possibilities of freedom, equality, and commensurateness between duties and compensation. With the passing of Lola Ising, Tita Amy may finally step out of the shadows of her mother's obligations, commitments, and history of generosity. Since her responsibilities to Tita Dolor and Tito Manuel, for instance,

were not as weighty as her obligations to Lola Ising (particularly in view of Tita Dolor's history of relations with her family; see Chapter 2), Tita Amy was finally able to say, following her daughter Jenny, 'that's enough.'



Figure 18. A group of cousins and siblings under the shade

Chapter 7

Siblingship beyond siblings: children and the intergenerationality of ties

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have only obliquely or in passing referred to the ways in which ties between siblings had implications for—and were, to some extent, shaped by—the succeeding generation. In this chapter, I consider this issue more closely, although from a less examined perspective. Observers of Philippine and other island Southeast Asian peoples have of course remarked on the multigenerational characteristic and implications of sibling ties in the region. It has been noted, for instance, how generations themselves may be thought of in terms of layers of sibling sets, and how distant relatives attempt to establish genealogical ties in reference to ancestors who are siblings or cousins (Cannell 1999; Carsten 1997; S. Errington 1989; 1990; McKinley 1981). Expectations pertaining to the solidarity and mutual help amongst brothers and sisters have been shown to extend to the descending generation, hence the pervasiveness of aunts and uncles who foster, help provide for, and even adopt nieces and nephews (Carsten 1991; McKinley 1981; Schrauwers 1999). In a similar fashion, at least in some contexts, hierarchies within a sibling set, particularly those set based on age, come to shape how members of the succeeding generation (cousins) relate to one another (Aguilar *et al.* 2009: 134; Carsten 1997: 86-87; McKinley 1981).

In contrast with this rather benign portrayal of siblingship and cousinship, I highlight in this chapter how these relations might also bear the potential for disaffection, difference, and disconnection. Specifically, this chapter explores how discord in the parental generation may or may not have consequences for the succeeding generation. As with issues of enmity, inequality, and ambivalence in kinship more generally, there has been less sustained consideration of the long-term implications of sibling conflicts. How might one's relation with cousins, as well as with an aunt or an uncle, be frayed because of a protracted dispute between one's

mother and one's aunt, for example? Alternatively, how might children come to stand apart from or perhaps mediate in a conflict between their parents and their uncles and aunts? To what extent might attempts at containing conflict within a generational layer be deemed desirable and feasible?

The conflicts that provide the background to this chapter are discussed at length elsewhere in the thesis: the opposition to Tita Monica's comparatively late marriage and the insinuation that Tita Olive had misappropriated remittances sent by the former (Chapter 4); Tito Celso's prolonged absence from Santa Rosa, including when Lola Ising was ill, and his separation from his wife (Chapter 5); and the assignment of the burden of caring for elderly kin to Tita Amy (Chapter 6). These conflicts, as I have demonstrated, were entwined with the Mahilways' quest for middle-classness, as well as the siblings' passage to adulthood. By examining the implications of these conflicts for the next generation, this chapter simultaneously affords a glimpse of the long-term consequences of achieving middle-classness (including the production of inequalities within the family, and a concern for the succeeding generation's perpetuation at the very least of such a status), as well as of the ways in which siblingship in adulthood entails among other things the need to balance such ties with parenthood and its precursor, marriage. In doing so, this chapter presents a portrait of young adult children and how they may present challenges for siblings in the ascending generation.

Cousinship as a border zone

In recounting Santa Rosa's history, my interlocutors often portrayed a past where villagers were close to one another, and where many villagers were in fact kin (see Chapter 1). Those who grew up from before the Second World War until the immediate post-war decades did so with their cousins and other relatives living nearby: in the same compound or on adjacent lots; at the very least within the same village. Those who were roughly of the same age or whose age differences were minimal (and more so if they were of the same gender) were often playmates and friends; they also attended school together, thus sharing in the daily walks to and

from the school (see Chapter 2). For these cohorts of villagers, the proximity amongst cousins reflected the closeness of siblings in the preceding generations: siblings grew up together in the village and remained there even after getting married, and as I discussed in Chapter 1, made their living from the land (as share-tenant farmers, farmhands, or as coconut sap gatherers) and the river and the sea (as fishers and fish farmers). At the same time, due to intermarriages within the village, sets of siblings and cousins became connected to one another. For succeeding generations, this meant bigger sets of cousins, particularly of the second and third degrees. In theory, it would be possible for someone to establish ties of cousinship with a generational contemporary, especially if they are both descendants of old-timer (*tumandok*) families in the village.

In this respect, the people of Santa Rosa were not unique in associating cousinship with closeness as well as cognatic kinship's potential for expansiveness. Ethnographic accounts from elsewhere in the Philippines make a similar point. Cannell's rural Bicolano informants expressed to her that 'We here are all cousins, that is, we are all siblings here' (1999: 54). When my colleagues and I conducted fieldwork in upland Batangas, our interlocutors told us that they were of *isang pisá* (Tag., literally 'from the same hatchling'), indicating that in the past they had ancestors who were siblings, and that by implication, present-day villagers were cousins of varying degrees (Aguilar 2009; 2013a; Aguilar *et al.* 2009).

In contrast to this emphasis on the connective and expansive possibilities inherent in cousinship, I wish to argue here that cousinship also contains the inverse of such possibilities. Along with conveying closeness, it may also mean distance; as well as invoking the widening of one's circle of kin, it may suggest the intergenerational transformation of kin to non-kin. Here, Davidoff's description of cousinship in 19th century bourgeois English families as the 'most attenuated of all genetic ties' and as 'a penumbra of relatedness' is very resonant (Davidoff 2012: 185-86).

As I have alluded to, cousins in Santa Rosa were distinguished by degrees of closeness. In fact, with the exception of the Tagalog term *pinsan*, which was sometimes used by my interlocutors, there was no generic term in Iloilo to mean 'cousin.' Instead, the local terms used were all indicative of degrees of cousinship:

pakaisá (first cousin), *pakaduhá* (second cousin), and *pakatlo* (third cousin). There were no terms used to refer specifically to fourth and further degrees of cousins, as these and other distant relatives would simply be called the generic term *pariente* (kin).

From the perspective of generations, this means that the children of *pakaisás* would be *pakaduhás*; the children of *pakaduhás* would be *pakatlós*; the generation below them would just be *parientes*; and those born to the next generation would perhaps no longer consider each other as kin. Given the shallow genealogies and ‘structural amnesia’ prevalent in the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia, it was in fact rare for kinship ties to be recalled beyond the third or fourth generation (cf. Carsten 1995c; Geertz & Geertz 1964). Cousinship in this context may thus be thought of as a border zone where close kin and their descendants are transformed to distant kin, and eventually to strangers and possible affines. In the Philippines, whilst marriages between second or further degrees of cousins are not legally prohibited, second and third cousin marriages are often met with hesitation, especially if the parties involved carry the same surname. When ties of distant cousinship are not remembered, marriage between such cousins is not seen as problematic, thus enlarging the set of possible affines, particularly in contexts where local endogamy is preferred (see Dumont 1981b; 1992).

The potential of cousinship for transforming close kin to distant kin and strangers was most powerfully demonstrated to me one day when Inday Gloria and her sisters (who I stayed with early in my fieldwork) spoke to me about their distant kin in Miag-ao, a town some 40 kilometres to the west of Iloilo City. Their paternal grandfather was born and raised in Miag-ao, but eventually migrated to Santa Rosa in the 1930s after he sold his share of the land, leaving his siblings in their birth village. As a consequence of this migratory move, the sisters and their kin in Santa Rosa did not come to know their distant cousins and other *parientes* in Miag-ao. All they knew was that in one upland village there, most of the residents are their kin. When I suggested that perhaps we could visit that village, Inday Gloria and her sisters refused and their faces registered shock and fear. Inday Gloria’s sister, Precy, then explained that they do not wish to visit their distant kin in Miag-ao because some of them might turn out to be *aswang* (a witch or sorcerer, but also a viscera-eating creature; see Chapters 1 and 2). Here, distance was so great that it could only

be expressed through the figure of the non-human—an utterance coloured no doubt by both the urban-rural and lowland-upland divides, where those who reside in the latter term in each of these oppositions are seen as less civilised than their urban and lowland counterparts (see, for example, Cannell 1999: 3-4; T. Gibson 2015 [1986]).

It is not just across generations that cousinship's capacity for expressing and producing difference and distance may be revealed, however. Even within a single generation, cousinship may come to mean the opposite of closeness and sameness. This possibility becomes apparent, perhaps less dramatically than the preceding example of the *aswang*, whenever cousinship is compared with relationships that are considered as weightier: siblingship and filiation. Grave family matters, including conflicts, were often deemed as matters properly left to siblings or to children and their parents. Although cousins when asked might voice an opinion or extend help to settle the issue, they would often do so with hesitation and carefulness, since they are 'merely' cousins (or nieces or nephews, if an aunt or uncle is involved). If one is over eager, one may be told off for meddling in 'family matters.' In one case, a niece wanted to take in and look after her uncle, who she felt was not being adequately cared for by her cousin, the uncle's daughter. The niece, however, eventually abandoned her plan since her cousin made it clearly known that she preferred her father to stay with her. 'I'm just a niece, she's the daughter. What could I do?,' the niece told me.

Here, I should add that the difference between cousins and siblings is linguistically marked. Whilst cousins would be addressed similar to the way siblings are—*manong* for males and *manang* for females, or alternatively, the shortened '*nong* or '*nang* along with the sibling's/cousins's first name or nickname; and simply personal names for contemporary and younger siblings/cousins—referential terms make a distinction between siblings (*utod*) and cousins (*pakaisá* etc.).

A similar pattern is observable in the ascending generations, especially in the past. Parents, for example, would be called *tatay*, '*tay*, *papá*, *pa*, *papáng*, '*pang* (father) or *nanáy*, '*nay*, *mamá*, *ma*, *mamáng*, '*mang* (mother), and parent's siblings and cousins would be addressed using the same terms but with their personal names attached (but the younger generations, especially in the city, would use *tita* and *tito*, terms borrowed from Tagalog). Referential terms for parents (*si* + *tatay/nanay* or other similar terms;

ginikanan to refer to one's parents collectively) and parents' siblings and cousins (*ttyà* or *ttyà* for aunt; *ttyò* or *ttyò* for uncle) would also be distinct.

In general, terms of address tend to highlight inclusiveness—neighbours and family friends who are deemed close may be called uncle or aunt; long-term visitors, as transpired in my case, may come to call their hosts as grandparents, uncles, and aunts, and may in turn be called child or older brother. Referential terms, on the other hand, demarcate between nuclear and extended kin. Earlier scholarship of Western Visayan kinship terms thus characterised kinship in the area as combining elements of classificatory and descriptive terminologies, and of Hawaiian and Eskimo types (M.A. Gonzalez 1965; Jocano 1968; 1969; 1983). Jocano, in particular, surmised that the combination of these elements lent Western Visayan kinship a degree of flexibility. I take this flexibility to include underscoring closeness and sameness in some contexts, and difference and distance in others.

The 'lightness' of cousinship relative to siblingship and filiation may at times become entwined with class and status differences, a possibility that is salient whenever a child or a young person is fostered, adopted, or given material support by a more affluent or less burdened aunt or uncle (cf. Schrauwers 1999). Such arrangements would often be predicated on expectations of sibling solidarity, particularly when the child's or young person's mother or father—i.e. the sibling of the aunt or uncle—is hard up, a favourite, or has passed away. In Santa Rosa, however, I encountered a few cases where the fostering, adoption, or extension of help to a niece/nephew was performed by an aunt or uncle only grudgingly. Moreover, if an aunt or uncle is married and has their own children, their spouses may come to resent the presence of, or the support extended to, the niece/nephew. In many instances, in exchange for their food and lodging, as well as a small allowance to allow them to attend a school or college, the niece or nephew would be expected to clean the house, help in the store or some other family business, and look after their younger cousins. In a sense, the niece or nephew becomes like a servant. There were likewise cases where the niece or nephew was sent to a state school or college, or an affordable private institution, or was asked to take a cheaper course, whilst the aunt's or uncle's own children were sent to more expensive private schools and colleges.

In such instances where a niece or nephew is treated differently and with less value relative to an aunt's or uncle's own children, one possible outcome is for the niece or nephew to feel inferior to the more affluent cousins, or for the latter to actually treat the former as a lesser person. Those who did experience such treatment almost always ended up having distant and tense relationships with their richer cousins and aunts or uncles, even when they reached adulthood. In a few cases, precisely because of treatment they had received in the past, poorer cousins became more driven in their studies and work, thus ending up as more successful than their richer cousins. In one such instance, an already successful nephew and his sister had to care for their aunt (mother's brother's wife) who, in the past, made known her displeasure that her husband was paying for the nephew's education. Already aged and widowed, and since her own children, who ended up as college drop-outs, were not eager to provide for her needs, the aunt was forced to seek help from her nephew and niece. In recounting this story, the niece and her brother emphasised their moral superiority to their aunt and their cousins.

If, as I argue here, cousinship may be associated with distance and difference along with sameness and closeness, then Cannell's observation about cognatic kinship more generally has a particular resonance: 'it relies at the margins on maintenance by contact and proximity' (1999: 54). How is closeness amongst cousins maintained? How might distance emerge and how might cousins respond accordingly? If siblingship in the previous generation is frayed, how might cousinship in the succeeding generation be frayed as well, or perhaps come to mend tears in kinship ties? The issues of contact and proximity are particularly germane, for as the case of Inday Gloria and her distant cousins and kin in Miag-ao demonstrates, lack of contact and proximity over an extended period of time potentially has a deleterious effect on kinship in general, and cousinship in particular. As presciently noted more than five decades ago by Lynch, who like Cannell also worked in Bicol, 'A third cousin who lives nearby may be more easily recalled, and can be more solidly integrated into ego's alliance system, than a first cousin living in another barrio or town' (1959: 53). In situations of intensified mobility, how then might cousinship figure?

Generations of cousins

This leads me back to the story of the Mahilways.¹ Consistent with the stories that I heard from my other interlocutors in Santa Rosa, older generations of the Mahilways—until the generation of Tita Mila and her younger siblings—had dense ties with their cousins. Lolo Minong and his brothers were raised together with their cousin, Pilar, after the latter lost her mother at an early age. The brothers considered Pilar as their *manang*, as they were younger than she was, and she was the only female in their combined family (the brothers' birth sister died at a young age). When they grew up, got married, and established their own families, the brothers and their cousin lived in the same compound in Santa Rosa. As I described in Chapter 1, Lolo Minong became the principal share tenant (*agsadór*) of Enso, Pilar's husband, who, in turn, was a lessee of a second cousin. The only member of the combined family who left the compound was Lolo Pedring, who after marriage, built a house just several hundreds of metres away from the compound on a lot inherited by his wife from her parents. Due to their proximity, Lolo Pedring and his family were often present in the compound, both on important occasions and regular days.

The closeness between Pilar and her cousins was further strengthened by the fact that she and her husband fostered Tito Nestor, and later, Tita Olive and Tito Benjie, as I have mentioned in various parts of this thesis. In addition, two of Lolo Pedring's children, Tita Betty and Tita Naty, lived with Pilar and Enso. Notably, all of Pilar's nieces and nephews called her and Enso their 'Mamá' and 'Papá,' respectively. Pronounced in the Castilian way, and not in the manner of American or Philippine English, these terms index the intimacy between the nieces/nephews and their aunt and uncle. Moreover, the Castilian pronunciation of these terms connotes a particular generation and a privileged background, since members of old landowning families in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines were often fluent in the Castilian language, at least until the American colonial period, when English became

¹ Readers are advised to refer to Figure 6 when reading this and subsequent sections.

the language of government, education, and commerce. As I indicated in Chapter 1, Enso in fact was born to such a landowning family.

In the succeeding generation, the attachment between Pilar and her cousins appears to have been reproduced. Lucing, the only daughter of Enso and Pilar who survived into adulthood, continued to have her second cousins live in their house even after the death of her parents. Most of her cousins left the house after they graduated from university and found work outside Iloilo, except for Tito Nestor who remained in the house until his death in 1992 (see Chapter 5). It is also significant that Lucing passed on the properties that she inherited from her parents to Tito Nestor and Tito Benjie, as well as to Tita Naty. Lucing likewise bequeathed their family's devotion to the Santísima Trinidad to Tita Dolor (see Chapter 6). When she retired from the telecommunications company that she worked for, she recommended Tita Olive to be her replacement (see Chapter 3).

Alongside the outward movement of some of the Mahilway siblings to the house of their Papá and Mamá, an inbound movement of cousins also occurred. Tita Edith, Lolo Berting's only child, came to live with her cousins and was raised by Lola Ising after the demise of her mother. A vivid testament to Tita Edith's closeness to her cousins is perhaps the fact that her picture was included amongst the portraits that were prominently displayed in the foyer of the Mahilways' main house (see Chapter 2). This closeness persisted well into adulthood and even after Tita Edith got married and had her own house elsewhere in the village. Indeed, after she lost her husband, a merchant seaman, to an accident at sea, and after her retirement as a school teacher, Tita Edith would always go to the compound, with Tita Amy providing for her daily meals and other needs.

The Mahilway children were also close to their cousins on the maternal side. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Lola Ising fostered the children of her sister and of a half-sibling—a total of ten nieces and nephews—and later, three of the thirteen children of one of the nieces. Of the ten originally fostered, one niece, an unmarried woman in her 50s, and who at the time of my fieldwork was a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia, considered the Mahilways' main house as her place of dwelling in Iloilo, and indeed one of the house's rooms was considered hers; she was looking forward to spending her retirement years in the house. Of her two surviving brothers,

one had his own house in a town adjacent to Iloilo, whilst the other and his wife and son would stay in the Mahilways' house every time they visited from Manila (or Canada, in the case of the son).

I should note here, however, that because of the number of nieces and nephews who were fostered by Lola Ising, the amount of resources that was spent on them appeared to have been limited. Instead of attending university, for example, some went to technical and vocational colleges, or otherwise became farmers. The cousin who became a domestic worker, for example, trained and worked as a dressmaker after leaving school. Moreover, five of those previously fostered (the children of Lola Ising's half-sibling) eventually migrated to the island of Mindanao where they were awarded a homestead by the Philippine government. During my fieldwork, they had not been back to Santa Rosa, and the Mahilways had no communication with them.

In contrast to the generally close ties of cousinship in the previous two generations, the Mahilway grandchildren appear to represent a generational break in terms of cousin relations. Because of the migratory moves made by the immediate post-war generation in pursuit of work, personal autonomy, and marriage and family life, a significant number of the succeeding generation were born and grew up outside of Santa Rosa and Iloilo. Their places of childhood included Negros, Manila, and Cebu. Moreover, even if the children of Tita Mila (the oldest of Lolo Minong's and Lola Ising's children) were raised in the village, they lived in a different house outside of the family compound—a consequence of their mother's decision to get married months after graduating from university (see Chapter 2). Only Tita Amy's children and Tito Celso's son, along with a few cousins whose education were supported by Tita Amy and Tita Monica, grew up in the compound.

Indeed, unlike in the previous two generations, fostering, in the sense of living with and raising from a young age a sibling's children, was markedly less prevalent in the grandchildren's generation. At most, aunts (Tita Monica, Tita Amy, and Tita Olive, in particular) would financially help to send some of their nieces and nephews to university. Although a few came to live in the compound, this was not generally the case. In most cases, their aunts would just send money for their school and university fees. The diminished salience of fostering in the grandchildren's generation

appears to have been a consequence both of the much smaller family sizes (Tita Mila's family being the exception), and of the fact that almost all of the Mahilway siblings and their spouses had independent sources of stable and regular income (Tito Nestor was the only exception; see Chapter 5). Notably, sociologists and demographers have described how fertility rates in the Philippines declined beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, partly because of delayed marriages, itself resulting from the expansion of educational and professional opportunities (Concepcion & P.C. Smith 1977; Miralao & Engracia 1989; see also Chapters 2 & 3).

It is likewise striking that the Mahilway grandchildren called their aunts and uncles *titos* and *titas* (or *táyòy/ày*, in the case of the older grandchildren), and not mother and father as the preceding generation did. The only exception here was Echo (Tita Amy's youngest child), who referred to Tita Dolor as 'Mommy,' an outcome related to the fact that Echo was the youngest child in the main house when Tita Dolor retired from her teaching job in the US. As I noted above, this shift to classificatory terminologies is partly generational; it also reflects the decrease in dependence between nieces and nephews and their uncles and aunts.

Moreover, following the grandchildren's migratory moves, their dispersal was furthered and extended to include North America, Australia, and the UK, as I discussed in Chapter 4. Some of the grandchildren, in fact, were already citizens of their new countries of residence, or were about to become so, when I commenced fieldwork in 2014. In a few cases, these migrant grandchildren already had their own families overseas. Santa Rosa was much farther away for these Mahilways.

Given the dispersal that had occurred across two generations, physical togetherness of the whole family became much more difficult and only rarely occurred. Cousins did not frequently see each other and their aunts and uncles. Here, ritual moments, such as the family's annual religious devotions (see Chapter 6), and celebrations, such as during Christmas and New Year, became critical for they enabled family reunions to occur. In a similar fashion, moments of crisis, such as Lola Ising's illness and death, became occasions for temporarily reversing the centrifugal movements that had accumulated over time.

If the importance of ritual, celebration, and crisis moments became much more pronounced amidst geographical dispersal, the accrual of shared everyday

moments became less prominent. As far as I could tell, those overseas tended to communicate mainly with their parents and siblings, and their conversations often only involved small bits and pieces of their everyday lives. In some cases, migrant grandchildren and their respective families in the Philippines would conceal or delay the sharing of information—such as a non-life-threatening illness, hospitalisation, or a domestic spat—as a form of care for one another. Moreover, although the migrant grandchildren were connected through Facebook and other online platforms to their immediate families and other kin, this online connectedness did not seem to me to convey much of the richness of everyday life. Not only were Facebook and other such platforms curated, but infrastructural issues in Santa Rosa where internet connection had often been slow, unreliable, and relatively expensive, acted as constraints on online togetherness (compare Aguilar *et al.* 2009; Madianou & Miller 2012; D. McKay 2012).

I should emphasise that the Mahilways were not unique in Santa Rosa in experiencing dispersal over time and across generations. The same factors that led to the outmigration of the Mahilway siblings and the formation of their own households away from the village were also present in varying degrees in the other families that I met, although the geographical dispersal of most of those families were not as extensive as that of the Mahilways. Josefa Nuñez, an elderly neighbour several of whose children and nieces and nephews had left Santa Rosa, offered to me the following comments:

The family got more and more dispersed (*naglapta nang naglapta*), of course. Children got married, had children, and their children in turn had their own. They moved farther and farther. You no longer know them, especially the younger ones. My nieces and nephews in Manila, for example, will soon have their own families, their own children, who I would no longer know. They're far, so I no longer see them and their children. Maybe in the future, I'd bump into their children and would've no idea that they're my relatives.

As Josefa's statement points out, the effects of dispersal on kinship ties tend to be more felt when it comes to the younger generations, such as the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of a migrant sibling. If, as she speculates, she would no longer know her nieces' and nephews' children, then it would imply that

their children would also not know their kin in Santa Rosa, including their second cousins. In fact, in cases where the parental sibling set is large and dispersed, it is possible for a child not to know some of his or her cousins, particularly if the age gap between the child's parent and of the cousins' is big. Here I am reminded of the statement of a young woman (a distant relative of the Mahilways, and the daughter of the youngest in a brood of twelve) on how, out of her 50-odd cousins of various degrees, she does not know some of those who live outside of Iloilo, a fact that resonates with Lynch's (1959) point about cousinship and proximity that I quoted above. 'I just see their pictures on Facebook, but I don't know them. We're not even Facebook friends,' she said.

Cousins amidst conflict

I have thus far described Ilonggo cousinship as a border zone where, depending on a range of factors, it may connote either closeness and sameness or distance and difference. Moreover, in contexts of geographical mobility, the potential for cousin ties to be attenuated is particularly pronounced. This potential is in fact most relevant for upwardly-mobile and middle class families given the historical development of the labour market in Iloilo and the rest of the Philippines (see Chapters 3 & 4). In this and the succeeding sections, I turn my attention to how enmity in the ascending generation may have repercussions for cousinship, starting with the normative claim that children, nieces, and nephews should not be involved in conflicts between their parents and their parents' siblings.

A couple of days before her return to New York in early January 2015, Tita Monica asked Echo and his older brother Mark to go to the mall to buy sheets of bubble wrap. She needed some to pack the mugs that a cousin's son had given her for Christmas. James (Echo's and Mark's nephew and their brother Chris's son) and I joined them. We completed our task fairly quickly, and just before heading back to Santa Rosa, we dropped by at McDonald's so I could treat them to some ice cream. Whilst we were queuing at the take-away counter, Tita Angeles and her two granddaughters (Mark's and Echo's nieces) approached us. They had bought a few

items from the department store and had just finished eating dinner in one of the mall's restaurants. She was about to call her sister Tita Olive's driver so they could be fetched, Tita Angeles said. They had been temporarily staying at her sister's house ever since Lola Ising's wake and funeral. It was not until after the holidays that they were going to return to Negros. Immediately, Mark suggested that we just drop them off, to which Tita Angeles quickly agreed.

When we arrived outside Tita Olive's house, Tita Angeles and the girls said goodbye and alighted the vehicle. I thought that we would be on our way to Santa Rosa. Yet, Mark decided that we should pop in and say hello. 'Let's go inside, so they won't be able to say anything,' he said, referring to Tita Olive and her husband, Tito Luis, whilst turning off the car's engine. The rest of us followed his lead. It was lightly drizzling, so we all ran towards the house's gate, which was several metres away from where Mark parked the car. Tita Angeles and her granddaughters were still there, and together we waited for the gate to be opened.

It was my first and only time visiting Tita Olive's. A rather imposing two-storey house in a small gated development, it looked much newer than the Mahilways' main house in Santa Rosa. Although both houses were built in roughly the same period and subsequently renovated, the renovation and expansion of Tita Olive's house had been much more recent than the main house. The gate—solid, black, and metal—and tall whitewashed walls set off the house from that of the neighbours. Once the gates were opened, we stepped into a manicured garden where plants, stones, and a koi fish pond surrounded the house itself. Combining elements of East and Southeast Asian and Hawaiian architectures, the house's aesthetics conformed to what could be described as contemporary house designs in the Philippines. The house bore resemblance to those built in new gated subdivisions in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines that target middle and upper-middle class families.

Tita Angeles led us inside the house. Since the front door was locked, we passed through the side door, which led us straight to the kitchen and the dining area. Tita Olive and Tito Luis were seated at the kitchen table. Mark, Echo, and the children approached the couple, whose hands they took and pressed to their foreheads (*nag-besa*). Surprised and visibly confused with our arrival, Tita Olive asked

no one in particular—and in the characteristic Ilonggo lilt that conveys gentleness and sweetness even when shocked or angry—whose child James was, and what brought all of us to her house. It was Mark who responded to his aunt's queries, although Tita Angeles soon enough gave a similar but slightly more elaborate recapitulation. Tito Luis, meanwhile, remarked to Mark that we were 'too bright and glaring (*kasanag sa inyo*),' an expression that perhaps bears some family resemblance to the Anglo-American idiomatic phrase 'like a deer in the headlights,' although in this case the deer would be Tito Luis and Tita Olive.

When Dale, the couple's son, came down from his room, he started chatting with his cousins. Meanwhile, James and the girls began to play and run around the house. The couple thus ended up talking more with me than they did with their nephews. They asked me about my research and how I had ended up in Santa Rosa. Tita Olive, in turn, narrated a familiar story: how Santa Rosa used to be sparsely populated and how rice fields, coconut trees, and fish ponds dominated its landscape. 'I know it because it used to be my playground,' she added, as if her knowledge of the village needed to be affirmed. Talking about the past with a stranger and being hospitable seemed easier than talking to the children of an estranged sibling, I thought to myself whilst conversing with the couple.

At five minutes before eight, Tita Olive cut short our conversation. She turned to her nephews and said that we should leave, as they would soon be saying the prayers for the dead (*decenario*) for Lola Ising. Although I was surprised that they were having nightly prayers separate from the ones held in the main house in Santa Rosa, I just smiled and said goodbye to the couple and their son. Mark and Echo did so too, and our group soon walked back to the car. Once inside, Mark chuckled and jested to me that I had learnt a new thing about their family; on the way back to Santa Rosa, he told Echo, 'at least, we showed our faces to them; they wouldn't think that we're involved [in the conflict].'

Mark's interpretation of our short visit to Tita Olive's, however, took on a different tone after we arrived at the house in Santa Rosa. Tita Monica and Tita Amy were attending and serving food to the neighbours who had come to recite the *decenario*, which ended just before we arrived. When the neighbours left, Mark narrated to his mother and his aunt how we ended up visiting 'the other house.'

What Mark emphasised in his rendition of the visit—and something that he would repeat over the next few days and weeks—was how his aunt and his uncle (and particularly the latter) were caught unawares by our visit. He quoted his uncle's statement that we were 'bright and glaring.' At the same time, he emphasised how they performed the *besa*, a sign of respect for elderly kin; and how we entered the house through the kitchen door, which in some contexts is done by servants and poorer relatives (often from the countryside), and may thus be read as an act of humility. Yet, throughout his narration, Mark never used the kinship term '*tito*' to refer to his aunt's husband, referring to him instead by his first name. In a society where age and generational differences matter, this was a marked act of disrespect. Here, Mark's earlier statement that Tito Luis and Tita Olive 'wouldn't think that we're involved in the conflict' became a matter of appearance. What were seemingly acts of respect and humility concealed disdain and hostility.

In receiving Mark's narration, Tita Monica simply listened and did not utter a word; her face remained expressionless. At some point, she stood up and left the dining area. For her part, Tita Amy was very restrained compared with her usual excitable and irascible self—she neither raised her voice nor said anything that would inflame the situation. Despite a perceptible smirk on her face, she contented herself with just asking for details every now and then. In fact, she always made it a point to remind her children not to participate (*indì mag-entra*) in the conflicts that afflicted her and her siblings. 'You must give respect to your aunts because they're older than you,' I heard her say several times to Mark and Echo.

Jenny, Tita Amy's daughter in England, had to abide too by her mother's instruction. As I have recounted in the previous chapter, Jenny was instrumental in her mother's awakening to the inequities that beset their family. As part of her attempts at exhorting Tita Amy to resist the demands that continued to be placed on her, Jenny expressed—perhaps hyperbolically—her anger at her aunts and cousins who had been burdening and were perceived as belittling her mother. Tita Amy shushed Jenny, telling her that no matter what, even if the world were turned upside down, her aunts would continue to be her aunts, whilst Jenny would continue to be their niece. Her structural position in this kinship universe meant, for Tita Amy, that Jenny must learn to keep her silence.

The non-involvement preferred by Tita Amy for her children contrasts greatly with the behaviour of Tita Olive's children. Tita Amy recounted to me several instances where she was supposedly snubbed by Mika, Tita Olive's daughter. 'It felt like I was being stabbed in the chest,' she said. Even Lola Ising was not spared Tita Olive's children's involvement in the conflict. When Mika had not yet moved to the US, she and her brother Dale heeded their father's bidding, and did not visit their kin in Santa Rosa. This meant, among other things, that Dale no longer spent time with his cousins Mark and Patrick, who being only slightly younger than he was, were his close friends. Likewise, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, it was Lola Ising who made efforts, often in secret, to visit her daughter and grandchildren in their house. At the time of their maternal grandmother's illness and eventual death, Mika was already working in the US and did not go home, unlike some of her first and second cousins. Dale, although based in Iloilo, only managed to visit his grandmother in the hospital twice, and did not help look after her. Moreover, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, when some of the grandchildren went home to Santa Rosa to see their ailing grandmother, they also managed to bond with one another by going out and doing things together. Dale was absent from these activities.

During one of Dale's rare visits to the hospital, he spent more time talking to his aunts, Tita Mila, Tita Dolor, and Tita Remy, and to me, convincing us to purchase some of the nutraceuticals that he was selling, than with Lola Ising inside her room or asking about her condition. He wanted his aunts to sign up as his 'downline' for the multilevel marketing firm he was working for. Moreover, when he did go inside the room and spoke to his grandmother, he alluded to the way some of his aunts referred with disdain to his father—particularly the latter's perceived despotic and unkind character (see Chapter 4).

Dale's behaviour in the hospital was discussed and appraised by his aunts. Interpreted as out of place—both because the hospital was deemed an inappropriate place for networking and sales, and because an ICU room was not considered a place to bring up family conflicts—it was also seen as indicative of a lack of concern and care for Lola Ising. Taken together with her sister's snubbing of Tita Amy years earlier, Dale's behaviour generated talk about how his parents, in addition to their failures as brother-in-law and sister, were also deficient parents. In particular, Tito

Luis was thought of as having presumably encouraged his children to harbour ill feelings towards their aunts; Tita Olive was imagined as having failed to discourage her children from making visible their own sentiments regarding the conflict, as well as failing to rein in her husband. In this way, Dale's and Mika's actions were understood as both arising from and perpetuating the corrosion of their parents' relationship with Tita Monica and Tita Amy.

At the same time, appraisals of Dale's and Mika's behaviour were tied to views of their age and presumed maturity. Already in their mid to late 20s, the siblings' actions were seen as deliberate. As I discussed in Chapter 2, autonomy from parents, is aspired for by and expected from children, especially once they have obtained education and have become employed, although such autonomy is usually not fully achieved until marriage. Whilst Mika and Dale were still unmarried when the events recounted here transpired, as professionals, their aunts could not consider them as children unaware of the gravity and consequences of their action, which in other contexts has been observed as a means of absolving young people from wrongdoing (see, for example, M.Z. Rosaldo 1980: chap. 3). Hence, even if the siblings were presumably influenced by their parents, as adults they were expected to know how to behave appropriately and to have the sense to see through their parents' influence. Their actions were thus construed as those of accountable adults, although shaped by the kind of parenting that they received.

I return below to the issue of parent-child relations and their place within an economy of conflict, but for now, I simply wish to highlight here that one consequence of children's failure to conform to expectations of non-involvement is the bringing of judgment and indeed shame (*huyâ*) upon their family—and upon their parents, in particular. As scholars in the past have shown, sentiments of shame in Panay Island and elsewhere in the lowland Philippines are rooted in being in a socially unacceptable position that (potentially) exposes a diminished self and family (J.C. Bulatao 1964; Jocano 1969; 1983; Lynch 1973b [1962]; see also Aguilar 1996). The shame associated with children's non-conformity to the generational and age hierarchies of kinship exceed the children themselves and implicate their parents. This suggests the need to unpack the kind of selves implicated in such relations of shame, an issue largely elided in the older literature (cf. M.Z. Rosaldo 1983).

Ensnared selves

Despite Tita Amy's exhortations, her children came to be affected by the enmity between herself and her siblings. I have already gestured at this in the previous section when I mentioned that Dale ceased to visit his cousins and other relatives in Santa Rosa, which resulted in the cooling of his friendship with Mark. Tita Olive's failure to recognise James likewise stemmed from the loosening of the ties between Tita Amy's children and 'the other house.' The conflicts of the preceding generation thus cast their shadow on the succeeding generation. In this section, I suggest that the effects of the conflicts in fact reverberated overseas, and that the conflicts came to be entwined with competition and jealousy amongst cousins. Ultimately, the intergenerational consequences of conflict are underpinned by the weight given to parent-child relations.

When Jenny first left for England in 2011, her cousins Leslie and Anna (Tita Angeles's daughters) were already working as nurses in the UK. Jenny's migration, however, was independent from those of her cousins, as she did not receive help from them in terms of either information or expenses. It was in fact another cousin (Glenn, Tito Benjie's son, who at that time was still waiting for his papers for Australia) who forwarded to Jenny the call for applications that he came across online. As the NHS hospital that recruited her paid for her travel and visa expenses, Jenny and her parents did not have to spend anything, except for the £200 that Jenny brought with her as pocket money.

Given these circumstances, Jenny's migration to the UK was not a case of chain or network migration, where earlier migrants would facilitate the subsequent movement of family members, extended kin, and friends to the same destination country. Upon arriving in the destination country, new migrants often rely on networks of kin, friends, and village-, town-, and province-mates in adjusting to their new environment, securing jobs and other economic opportunities, and navigating the social and economic hierarchies of the destination country. Reliance on these networks affirms existing relations, whilst setting in motion others. As we have seen in Chapter 4, this was what transpired when Tita Monica helped her niece Karen move

to the United States. In turn, Karen helped her younger sister Grace follow her to America. Similarly, it was Leslie who facilitated her sister's move to the UK.

As a mode of migration, chain or network migration appears to account for a significant proportion of Filipino migration, both temporary and permanent, and this is particularly true in the case of migration to the United States and Italy (Aguilar 2013a; Asis 1994: 21; Natividad & Medina 1985; J.M. Liu *et al.* 1991; D. McKay 2007; 2012; Nagasaka 2015). It has also been documented that in contexts where the local Filipino migrant community is divided along class, occupational, and other hierarchies, and where migrant socialities are consequently circumscribed, the importance of networks based on kinship, friendship, and locality continue to matter, and perhaps even more so, albeit such networks appear to be mapped onto the hierarchies that divide migrants (Aguilar 1996; Amrith 2010: 420).

Notwithstanding the independence of Jenny's migration from those of her cousins Leslie and Anna, there were expectations on the part of Jenny and her family that the two would assist her once she arrived in England. These expectations included fetching her from the airport and helping her settle into her new accommodation. Neither of these expectations were met. Her cousins not only failed to fetch Jenny from the airport, but they also did not visit her in the Midlands, where she was employed. What they did instead was to invite her to their respective places in Wales and London. Jenny eventually declined her cousins' invitation after she consulted Tita Amy. 'She wasn't familiar with the train system, and more importantly, she had a limited amount of money at that time,' was how Tita Amy justified the advice she gave to her daughter.

This failure to help must have left a considerable strain on Jenny's relationship with her cousins, so much so that they never saw each other in the UK, even after Jenny had settled in, had learnt how to navigate the transport system, and had started earning her salary. Jenny had actually been very mobile: during weekends and holidays, she and her colleagues and friends would visit their other friends in England; she was also a frequent visitor to London, exploring the city's tourist areas; during my first few months in Santa Rosa, she even had a brief holiday by herself in Italy. Jenny's adventures, however, did not include her cousins' places.

In fact, it was in Lola Ising's hospital room that Jenny and Anna, the younger cousin, saw each other for the first time some four years since Jenny left for England.

In recounting Jenny's and her cousins' failure to see one another in the UK, Tita Amy at first attributed the failure to their busy schedules. Tita Amy's voice and facial expression indicated to me, however, that there had to be something else to the matter. True enough, she soon narrated to me the back story, as it were, of Jenny's distance from her cousins.

In the early 1990s, Leslie's and Anna's brother Ryan moved to Santa Rosa from their house in Negros to attend maritime college. Tita Amy took in Ryan, and with some help from Tita Monica, paid for his college expenses. At that time, Tita Amy's own children were still in school or were very young. Tita Amy and Tito Ruel thus considered Ryan as their oldest child for he was the first one that they sent to college.

Resonating with the experiences and trajectory of his uncle Tito Nestor (see Chapter 5), Ryan only managed to reach the second year of his degree programme as he fell under the influence of his friends in Iloilo. Unlike Tito Nestor who was an alcoholic, his vice was drugs. On several occasions, he even misused the money given to him by Tita Amy as payment for college fees just to buy drugs. Tita Amy gave him several opportunities to redeem himself, but he continued with his vice. Eventually, Tita Amy decided to no longer support her nephew's education.

Consequently, Tita Amy's relationship with Tita Angeles deteriorated, an outcome that was aggravated by several factors, including the fact that Tita Angeles, just like their other siblings, passed on to Tita Amy the responsibility of caring for Lola Ising and other elderly kin (see Chapter 6). Moreover, even when Leslie and Anna migrated to the UK, neither they nor their mother contributed to Lola Ising's upkeep and other expenses in Santa Rosa. Of Lola Ising's grandchildren, it was only Jenny and Chris who regularly sent money for their grandmother, including for the annual birthday celebration. Tita Amy hinted too that when Leslie married a descendant of one of Iloilo's wealthy families, Tita Angeles started to entertain delusions of grandeur and became more distant from her kin in Santa Rosa. The irony, Tita Amy pointed out, was that whenever Tita Angeles would visit Santa Rosa, she would ask for money from her.

Perhaps the most critical factor that led to the deterioration of the ties between the two sisters was the conflict between Tita Monica and Tita Olive. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the conflict was precipitated by Tita Olive's husband's objection to Tita Monica's marriage. Tita Amy was on Tita Monica's side whilst Tita Angeles was on Tita Olive's. Tita Olive after all sent Leslie to a private secondary school and paid for the first two years of her nursing degree. Age-wise too, Tita Olive was closer to Tita Angeles than to Tita Amy. I was told that Tita Angeles would feed Tita Olive with exaggerated stories of whatever she would see or hear in Santa Rosa, thus worsening the enmity between the latter and Tita Monica. Tellingly, as I have indicated above, whenever Tita Angeles and her children and grandchildren would visit Iloilo, they would not stay in the family's main house in Santa Rosa, but in Tita Olive's.

'*Nadamay* (Tag., implicated; *nadalahig* in Hiligaynon),' was how Tita Amy eventually described Jenny's relations with her cousins. Tita Amy's use of the Tagalog term is revealing, as *damay* and its correlates like pity and debt of gratitude have been key words in the cultural analysis of Tagalog and other Philippine societies (Cannell 1999; Iloilo 1979; Rafael 1993 [1988]; 2010). In this line of inquiry, *damay* is taken to mean empathy, the merging of selves, and the voluntary sharing and mourning of another's loss or misfortune. In this way, *damay* is seen as generative of sociality, but also of appropriate personhood, especially in contexts of marginality, oppression, or colonial domination. Tita Amy's use of the term, however, departs from this line of meaning, as it highlights how one's sharing of another's plight may occur even if either or both parties do not give their assent. The use of the prefix '*na*' in this instance indicates involuntariness and even coercion on Jenny's part.

Although extending *damay* or being *nadamay* could very well occur in other types of relationship, I venture here that such potentiality is even more pronounced in the context of kinship, including filiation. Relations between parents and their children, as I discussed in Chapter 2, at times carry particular weight in Santa Rosa and many other parts of the Philippines. To recall some of the arguments I raised there, children are thought of as completing their parents and instantiates the family. Children too are seen as owing an unpayable debt of gratitude to their parents for the gift of life, and for providing access to education and other opportunities in life.

Moreover, the relationship between parents and their children was spoken of in Santa Rosa partly through the notion of substitution, where children's achievements are counted as those of their parents, and where parents' deficiencies are redeemed by their offspring. As the stories I discuss in this chapter demonstrate, filiation also mediates sibling ties in the ascending generation, cousin relations, and uncle/aunt-niece/nephew relations.

Given the significance of filiation in this context, it is not surprising that Jenny's relations with her cousins suffered because of Tita Amy's own attenuated siblingship with Tita Angeles, which itself was intertwined with Tita Amy's relationship with her nephew, Ryan. The weight of filiation likewise makes understandable how Mika's and Dale's behaviour, which I discussed above, led to appraisals of the kind of parenting they received from Tita Olive and Tito Luis. Perhaps counterintuitively, the significance of parent-child relations also accounts for Tita Amy's repeated, even anxious, insistence to her children that they should not involve themselves in the enmity between herself and her siblings. In a lifeworld where parents and children are irrevocably connected to one another and indeed stand for each other, it is easy for children to become involved in their parents' conflicts. At the same time, since Tita Amy's children were already adults (or almost so, in the case of Echo), just like their cousins Dale and Mika, they no longer had recourse to notions of childhood, innocence, or lack of knowledge that could potentially shield their actions from the judgment of others.

I end this section by noting that despite Tita Amy's efforts to separate her children from the sibling conflicts in which she was enmeshed, there was a sense in which Tita Amy herself failed to maintain this separation. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Tita Amy often drew attention to how her daughter entered the UK expense-free and with a Tier 2 working visa (as opposed to a Tier 4 student visa). Given the current immigration regime in place in the UK, having such a working visa is highly valued by Filipino migrants (Alcantara 2007), and as Tita Amy demonstrates, also by their kin in the Philippines.

During a conversation with one of Lola Ising's nurses, Mark chimed in and said that his sister only took one week of leave from her former work to prepare for the IELTS, which she passed; thus in no time, she was bound for the UK (*pasár*

dayón, lakát dayón ah')—the pride was very palpable in his voice. Tita Amy then continued with her story, saying that Jenny's experience differed from those of other contemporary migrant nurses, including a few of Jenny's former university mates and colleagues in Iloilo, and indeed Jenny's cousin, Anna. Anna had entered the UK with a student visa, and her parents incurred loans for the proof of funds required by the British Home Office, and for payments to a local migration agency. Examined in the light of Tita Amy's relation with her sister, Tita Angeles, her comparison of Jenny's entry to the UK with that of Anna seemed to imply that her daughter was the more fortunate, if not better, migrant nurse. This also meant that, by extension, Tita Amy was the more successful parent compared to Tita Angeles.

Between suspicion and pity

In the same way that conflicts amongst siblings may strain relations in the succeeding generation, such conflicts may lead to the attenuation of ties between aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews who were previously close to one another. Here I turn to the story of Patrick and his relationship with his cousins and aunts in Santa Rosa, parts of which I have already narrated elsewhere in the thesis. Although Patrick grew up in the family compound in Santa Rosa, he eventually moved to Manila. This move occurred after Patrick's parents separated, and after Tito Celso, Patrick's father, became estranged from his siblings (see Chapter 5). Yet, as I discuss shortly, Patrick's story also demonstrates that despite conflicts in the ascending generation, cousins may remain close, although such closeness may itself pose a problem for cousins and their aunts or uncles. His story likewise illustrates how class differences, along with conflicts in the parental generation, may lead to the attenuation of ties of cousinship.

As I briefly mentioned in Chapter 4, throughout Patrick's stay in Santa Rosa, his aunts often advised him on what to do with his future. Futurity, an issue that is particularly pronounced in middle class and upwardly mobile contexts (see Introduction), pertained in this instance to Patrick's educational and professional trajectory. Tita Amy and Tita Monica were concerned that he ought to complete the

required internship so that he could finally graduate from maritime college and start his career as a merchant seaman. They were worried that at 25 years old, Patrick's future as a merchant seaman was fast diminishing. As I also mentioned, Patrick had previously decided to forego his internship slot so that he could drive for his father in Manila. At one point during my fieldwork, when it became known that Patrick fancied one of the resident doctors in the ICU, his two aunts encouraged him yet again to complete his degree. 'Do you know that only officials of a shipping vessel are able to match the income of a doctor?', Tita Amy asked him rhetorically.

One night during Lola Ising's wake, Mr and Mrs Domingo paid a visit to the Mahilways. Mr Domingo, also a *tumandok* of Santa Rosa, was Tita Amy's childhood friend and Tito Celso's childhood best friend, and was one of the first merchant seamen in the village to have reached the rank of captain. Mr Domingo was, in fact, the one who recommended Patrick to his employer for an internship. Tita Amy took advantage of the couple's visit—she called Patrick and his mother, Tita Lorna, to join her as she talked with her friend. She asked that Patrick be given another chance at an internship.

By then, I already knew that Patrick was not keen on proceeding to a career in the merchant navy. Roughly a month before Lola Ising's death, Patrick and Echo drove me to my flat after the farewell dinner (*despedida*) for Tita Monica, who was set to fly back to New York the following day. On our way to my flat, Patrick mentioned that he used to study nursing in a private college, but had to quit after a year since he did not meet the programme's retention requirements. 'I didn't take it seriously,' he explained to me.

Consequently, he moved to a maritime college for a degree in maritime transportation—a programme for would-be deck officers of shipping vessels. However, he was not particularly proud of his new course. As he did not wish to be identified by neighbours and friends as a student of the maritime college, he would bring his uniform with him to change into in one of the establishments surrounding the college campus. In the afternoon, before going home to Santa Rosa, he would change to a different set of clothes ('civilian' in Philippine English). 'I was really embarrassed,' he told me. I discussed in Chapter 5 the reasons that historically underpinned merchant seafaring's lower prestige relative to professions like

engineering, teaching, nursing, and medicine. As Patrick's embarrassment indicates, even if the merchant navy had become known in Iloilo and the surrounding provinces as a route to prosperity (a captain could earn as much as 700,000 pesos per month; approx. £10,000), it continued to lack the prestige bestowed upon other, more entrenched professions.

In Patrick's case, however, he articulated his dissatisfaction not in terms of the reasons discussed in Chapter 5, but in terms of the demographic composition of the maritime college. Most of his fellow students were, he said, not from Iloilo City, but from the surrounding provinces. As such, he thought that maritime programmes were not so much for urban dwellers like him, but for the children and grandchildren of farmers in the countryside. Perhaps to emphasise this point, he told me how some of his classmates' parents would pawn farmland or sell water buffaloes and other livestock to pay their sons' college fees—although some of his classmates would in fact use the money to splurge in the city's entertainment districts. Patrick's articulation was surprising as it disregarded his own family's recent agrarian past, which as I pointed out earlier in the thesis, was central to the family's rise to middle-classness.

Here, Patrick's aunts' explanation as to why their nephew did not want to become a merchant seafarer provides a clue. 'He's so spoilt that he doesn't want to be bossed around, which is what's going to happen once he goes on board a ship,' they told me. 'And he probably doesn't want to scrub and remove rust from the deck,' they added. As the only child of his parents, Patrick received undivided care and affection, particularly from his father who sought to compensate for his physical absence and for Tita Lorna's extreme frugality by providing all of his son's needs and wants. Given this very comfortable upbringing, the Mahilways' past became very removed from Patrick's everyday reality. Patrick was thoroughly a city dweller, and one very much attuned to contemporary consumption trends.

During the outing to the beach three days after Lola Ising's funeral mentioned in Chapter 4, I noticed that Patrick's knapsack's inner lining had the red and white pinstripe design peculiar to Herschel, a fashion brand of bags with Scottish-Canadian roots. I had previously known it to be very popular amongst upper and upper middle-class teenagers and young adults in Manila—such as the

students in the Jesuit university where I used to study and work. I teased Patrick about his bag, saying that at about 5,000 pesos (approx. £75) each, I myself could not afford one. His cousin, Echo, laughed when he heard me say this, and joined me in teasing Patrick. Tita Monica, who was standing near us, just looked at us and did not say anything, although her face registered surprise at what she heard.

The bag was eventually seen by Patrick's aunts as consistent with his discriminating taste that had been enabled by what they considered as his father's indulgent approach to parenting. Indeed, Patrick's bag stood in sharp contrast with those of his cousins—Echo, for instance, contented himself with an imitation of a Jansport (another popular, but less expensive brand) bag. When I was in Santa Rosa, Patrick also got a new iPhone after signing up for a two-year contract with a mobile phone company. Amongst the Mahilway grandchildren who had yet to become professionals, he was the only one with both a new Apple smartphone, which was more expensive than other brands of smartphones, and a monthly mobile phone plan, which was usually only availed of by professionals, businessmen, and upper and upper-middle class consumers. Although Echo also purchased an iPhone, it was a second-hand and older model that he bought using the money given to him by his sister and his cousins when they arrived from abroad; he also used a 'pay as you go' SIM card.

Likewise, I was told by Tita Monica how, every time she would arrive from New York, she would take her nephews and nieces in Santa Rosa to the mall, so that she could shop for them. Unlike his cousins who would be happy with generic or department store-labelled items, Patrick would prefer 'branded' clothes that cost more than double their generic counterparts. In fact, much to my embarrassment, Patrick would often tease me by inspecting the label or by asking me directly what the brand was of whatever shirt I happened to wear. 'He's not knowledgeable in life,' Tita Monica said, bemoaning her nephew's seeming lack of practicality.

One consequence of Patrick's more discriminating taste and spoilt upbringing was his estrangement from his cousin Mark. Born two months apart and having lived in the same compound, Mark and Patrick, as I mentioned above, were part of the same *barkada*. Yet, as they grew up, the two of them drifted apart. To begin with, unlike his cousin, Mark was not particularly conscious when it came to clothes and

gadgets. Instead, he preferred tinkering with his motorbike, hanging out, and going on races with fellow motorbike enthusiasts. ‘We had different preferences,’ Mark explained to me.

Moreover, as age mates, it was perhaps inevitable that the two would be compared by the adults in the family: whilst Mark was thrifty and could be relied on to help his parents at the water refilling station and by driving for the family, Patrick was deemed extravagant and irresponsible. Mark’s duties likewise consumed a lot of his time, whereas Patrick had more free time.

It was thus to Echo that Patrick ended up being especially close. Seven years younger than his cousin, Echo was the youngest of Tita Amy’s children and the least burdened with household responsibilities. When Patrick came home to help care for Lola Ising, he and Echo would often sleep at the hospital, and whenever they did not have hospital duties, the two of them would hang out in a neighbour’s internet and online gaming shop, or would go to one of the city’s malls. At some point, Echo’s fashion sense started to mirror that of Patrick’s. Echo also acted as his cousin’s wingman when the latter tried to pursue one of the nurses attending to their grandmother. For his aunts, Patrick’s closeness to Echo indicated immaturity on Patrick’s part—he was seen as unwilling and unable to come to terms with the responsibilities expected of him as a young man.

This brings me back to the issue of the future. Notably, whenever his aunts would discuss with him his career trajectory, Patrick would often just smile or laugh, choosing not to argue with them. At times, he would respond with a joke, thus defusing potentially contentious moments. Even his return to Manila—which as I described in Chapter 4, surprised his aunts—was meant to evade or at least minimise resistance from his aunts, as well as his mother. Not surprisingly, his aunts interpreted his decision to go back to Manila as a way of distancing himself from his mother and his aunts who would not condone what they saw as a directionless life. Indeed, when Patrick bid goodbye to Tita Amy and Tita Monica, the two asked him to go inside the house and take leave from Tita Dolor; when Patrick emerged, he quipped that he had reported to the Senate—an expression referring to the investigations of corruption and anomalies that the Philippine Senate conducts from time to time. As

soon as Patrick left for the airport, Tita Amy and Tita Monica expressed their irritation over what they had heard.

At the same time, although his aunts sought, perhaps in vain, to steer Patrick's life into a trajectory consistent with middle-class aspirations, and which would reproduce the Mahilways' achievement of middle-classness, his very presence in Santa Rosa was shadowed with doubt. Resonating with the idea that I discussed above of filiation as involving dense ties and mutual implication between parents and their children, but refracted through the specific history of his parents' relationships, Patrick's aunts saw him as Tito Celso's eyes, ears, and hands. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, Tito Celso spoke to Lola Ising in the hospital every day using Patrick's mobile phone. Patrick was also responsible for renting the car that Tito Celso used when he came home briefly to Iloilo for the last night of Lola Ising's wake and the funeral the next day. As such, whenever the siblings in Santa Rosa wanted to talk about Tito Celso or something that they sought to keep from their brother, they did so after making sure that Patrick was not around or was far enough away not to hear them.

Similarly, Patrick's Facebook posts became the subject of scepticism. As it turned out, Patrick was fond of posting religious sayings and prayers—an outcome of his and his father's conversion to Evangelical Christianity that I referred to briefly in Chapter 5. He was also fond of posting status updates expressing his sadness over Lola Ising's illness, as well as pictures with the latter in her hospital bed. Some of his aunts expressed doubt that he had changed from a spoilt child to a religious young man. Such doubt even combined with the allegation that Tito Celso was bewitched by his new wife (see Chapter 5)—some of his aunts raised the possibility that just like his father, Patrick was under a spell.

The doubt that enveloped Patrick appeared to be infectious. Even Echo, owing to his closeness to Patrick, became the subject of suspicion. When it became known to the family that Echo had accompanied Patrick in securing the vehicle for Tito Celso, and in fetching the latter and his new wife from the airport, Tita Monica grilled Echo so as to draw out more information regarding Patrick's activities on behalf of his father. At first, Echo denied knowing anything, but upon Tita Monica's insistent questioning, he yielded. 'Where does your loyalty lie?', Echo was asked at

one point. Given Echo's dependence on his parents, as well as Tita Amy's closeness to Tita Monica, there was no doubt as to what the answer to the question was.

Seen from the vantage point of the history of Patrick's relationship with his aunts, the suspicion surrounding his presence indicated a marked shift in the quality of these relationships. After all, he used to seek advice and solace from Tita Amy during his father's incarceration and when his parents separated. He would also frequently request Tita Amy to cook his favourite desserts and other dishes. Tita Monica, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, supported his studies; given the comparatively small age difference of about 20 years between her and her nephew, she was actually one of his playmates during his childhood. Indeed, during light-hearted moments, Patrick would tease Tita Monica by calling her 'sister' or even just 'Monica.'

At the same time, Patrick's mediating role in Santa Rosa was not unidirectional. Given the ties between him and his father, his aunts used his presence to convey information that they wanted their brother to know. Tita Monica, in fact, assigned Patrick to keep track of Lola Ising's hospital expenses, and to act as coordinator between the nursing staff and members of the family in Santa Rosa, especially at night, when only he and Echo were in the hospital. Tita Monica justified these assignments in terms of making Tito Celso aware of the severity of Lola Ising's condition and of the extent of the expenses that were being incurred. 'He should know so he won't think that we're just exaggerating things,' Tita Monica said.

Patrick was thus placed amidst a tussle between his father, his mother, and his father's siblings. This was certainly not an easy position to be in, so much so that even Mark, who as I have discussed had drifted apart from his cousin, felt pity for him. The night before Patrick's flight to Manila, I went to bed ahead of Mark and Echo (who I was sharing the room with), and Edwin, one of Lola Ising's former nurses who was visiting that night for the New Year's Eve celebration. When I woke up at around two in the morning, Echo was already asleep beside me on the bed, whilst Mark shared with Edwin the mattress on the floor. The two were discussing Patrick's predicament and how Mark distanced himself from his cousin. Mark likewise told Edwin that even if Patrick wanted to stay in Santa Rosa, being dependent on Tito Celso precluded this option; Tita Lorna would not provide for her son's discriminating taste; and Patrick's aunts would certainly not tolerate his lack of

interest in a merchant seaman's career. At that hour, in the darkness, Mark said in a hushed voice: 'he is truly pitiable (*kaluluoy gid siya mo*).'

Conclusion

I started this chapter with a sketch of cousinship in Santa Rosa, highlighting how, even if my interlocutors were inclined to speak of a past in which, compared to the present, cousins were physically and emotionally closer to one another and to their aunts and uncles, estrangement was very much a possibility in such relations. Migratory moves associated with economic aspirations and pursuits of autonomy and adulthood appear to have exacerbated such a possibility. Hence, I suggested that whilst cousinship is often understood as underscoring closeness, as approximating siblingship, and as signalling the flexibility of cognatic kinship, it may also be read as gesturing towards the opposite direction, the weakening of sibling ties over time and across generations. Although earlier scholarship on Filipino kinship signalled the co-existence of these opposing tendencies within cousinship, subsequent scholarship emphasised cousinship's more positive aspects. The present chapter may thus be read as an attempt to retrieve Filipino cousinship's less understood aspects.

With this view of cousinship as a backdrop, I then discussed several scenes that I witnessed or which were relayed to me during my fieldwork, which bring to the fore the intergenerationality both of sibling ties and conflicts. What emerged from these scenes is the significance ascribed to—and the sheer difficulty of—keeping the succeeding generation outside of the conflicts that may trouble a sibling set. Although seen as part of being good kin (either as a child, niece or nephew, or parent), the expectation of non-involvement on the part of the succeeding generation was particularly challenging to meet given the significance of parent-child relations. Compared to relations between nieces or nephews and aunts or uncles and amongst cousins, parent-child relations were given more weight by my interlocutors. Indeed, in some of the scenes that I discussed, the corrosion of ties between nephew or niece and aunt or uncle precipitated the weakening of sibling ties in the parental

generation; in others, a nephew's or niece's actions contributed to the perpetuation of rifts between a parent and their siblings.

Given that the conflicts discussed here were entwined with aspirations for middle-classness, the scenes that I examined likewise foregrounded how sibling conflicts and their repercussions for the succeeding generation may even permeate migratory moves, which as the preceding chapters highlight, were key ways of achieving middle-classness. Moreover, the attenuation of sibling ties may actually be informed by class differences, which in turn, colour relations amongst cousins. In fact, in cases where class differences did not fray relations between siblings, such differences may lead to diminished ties between cousins in the succeeding generation.



Figure 19. Batiano river at sunset

Conclusion

Memories of becoming

I began this thesis with a consideration of the conflict that ensued after the death of Lola Ising: about whether the family's six-hectare farmland should be sold to a real estate developer and how the proceeds of the sale should be divided. Such a conflict, which Lola Ising sought to forestall prior to her death, seemed to be consistent with a picture of siblingship that is prevalent in Iloilo and elsewhere in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. In this picture, sibling ties are understood to be particularly prone to becoming frayed after the demise of parents, especially where there is property to be inherited.

Yet, as I elaborated in later chapters, the conflict must also be understood as having arisen from the longer history of sibling ties, including earlier marriage decisions, migration, and conversely, immobility and inequalities. Seen from the vantage point of this history, the conflict over the farmland was but the heightened expression of animosities and resentments that had accumulated over the years. Although siblingship is often thought of in terms of solidarity, the material that I have considered vividly suggests that the potential for enmity and estrangement is fundamental to sibling ties, particularly in adulthood.

At the same time, the conflict shed light on how land was intertwined with the broader history and morality of class in Iloilo. Land served to anchor both the family's identity as long-time residents of Santa Rosa, and the image of Lola Ising and Lolo Minong as parents who strove to give their children education and later, professional status. Stories about the land served to distinguish the Mahilways from landed families of old, who were spoken of as voracious land-grabbers, but also as having squandered their fortunes leading to a much-diminished status and even disappearance from the local economy. Such stories distinguished too between those who successfully parlayed yields of the land into the middle-class essentials that were

university degrees and professional qualifications, and those who did not, and consequently had to sell whatever land they had managed to acquire in the past.

Here, being properly middle class entailed a specific relationship to land: a tempered and responsible sense of ownership that eschews both greediness for property and the eagerness to dispose of it. Even so, as I described in Chapter 1, the power of land to anchor such identities and moralities was under pressure from two fronts: the influx of migrants and informal settlers into Santa Rosa and the increase of the value of land due to a prevailing economic boom.

In Chapter 2, I focussed my attention on education, which most of my interlocutors in Santa Rosa considered a superior alternative to land as an inheritance. Unlike land, educational achievements belong to a person until death—not only are such achievements impartible, they may also neither be given away nor stolen. As such, they supposedly could not be a cause of sibling conflicts. Moreover, unlike landholdings, which could very well be dissipated over time, education was seen as having lasting consequences, not just for the children who go to school and university, but also for the succeeding generations. Thus, parents with limited schooling, if any, and with no property to call their own, endeavoured to provide their children with educational advancement.

I have suggested that central to the allure of education as an inheritance was a logic of substitution and completion between parents and their children, where the latter's achievements served to compensate for what were deemed as the former's inadequacies that stemmed from limited or absent opportunities in the past. Such achievements redeemed parents and gave them and their children an elevated sense of personhood. Moreover, this logic of substitution and completion entailed a recasting of inheritance into something that is not passively received by children, but as something that they must work on and bring to fruition.

For older siblings, educational aspirations may have meant delaying or foregoing their own academic and even marital aspirations so that they could help support their younger siblings. As I have discussed, failure on the part of older siblings to conform with such expectations could have corrosive effects on their relationship with their parents, as well as younger siblings. I have argued too that in framing education as an inheritance, the people I worked with appeared to have

understated the material basis of educational success. Here, sharecroppers, especially those who farmed substantial parcels of land and who had ties with landlords and their overseers, as the Mahilways did, had an advantage compared with landless farmworkers and other villagers whose sources of livelihood were less secure.

For my Ilonggo friends, educational success meant gaining the qualifications to pursue professional careers. In the immediate decades after the Second World War, the most accessible profession was that of a school teacher. At its height in the 1950s and the 1960s, teaching was a field that afforded some authority, respectability, and economic security. It was the easiest route to middle-classness. Chapter 3 thus examined the pursuit of teaching careers by a number of the Mahilway siblings and their cousins, which earned for the family a reputation as ‘a lineage of teachers.’ In recounting this professionalisation, my interlocutors linked it to desires to establish autonomy vis-à-vis their parents and other kin, albeit that in practice, securing teaching posts in state schools was not easily disentangled from ties of kinship and patronage. Indeed, although older siblings may have entered the teaching profession because of their intellect and skills, younger siblings who followed their path often relied on the former’s connections to secure teaching posts, particularly in city schools and other sought-after locations.

Moreover, as the case of the Mahilways demonstrates, following in the footsteps of an older sibling may reinforce hierarchies based on age and birth order, which are fundamental axes of difference within Filipino and Southeast Asian kinship. It was likewise the case that whilst those who were considered successful teachers emphasised in their narrations their intellectual and even moral superiority relative to fellow villagers and even schoolteachers, they were perceived by others as having become too distant from their kin and peers. Here, professional success appeared to have come at the price of one’s ties. As we saw in the case of Tita Dolor, this alternative narrative accentuated her remaining unmarried and her failure to cultivate ties with her siblings and their children who she had come to depend on after her retirement. The pursuit of autonomy culminated in an unwelcome kind of dependence.

By the 1970s, the prestige and economic attractiveness of the teaching profession was on the decline. By this time too, overseas labour migration was on the

rise, including those of nurses, doctors, and other health professionals. For those who desired to achieve or maintain a semblance of social mobility and middle-classness, overseas migration was the most viable option. Chapter 4 attended to how Tita Monica, the youngest of the Mahilway siblings, pursued a nursing career after rejecting her siblings' suggestion that she become a school teacher like them. This decision was spoken of partly in terms of effecting difference and autonomy from older siblings, but also in terms of a changing landscape of professions, and of aspirations not to get 'stuck' in a given profession and social standing. Whilst this decision propelled further social and geographic mobilities, it also generated new expectations and responsibilities, and indeed reconfigured relations of authority amongst the siblings.

I have suggested that the transformations that the shift to health professions and overseas migration generated were welcome in so far as they led to flows of support from Tita Monica to her siblings and their children, and because such flows, in a reversal of the age-based hierarchy, enabled Tita Monica to exercise influence and ascendancy within the family. Moreover, although the flows of support were often described using the language of 'help,' it was also the case that at times they were experienced as difficult or impossible to refuse. There were instances too where such flows came in the form of theft, with what seemed to be irreparable consequences for sibling ties. More generally, to the minds of those I came to know in Santa Rosa, such flows came with the risk of not being bestowed the appropriate recognition, commemoration, and reciprocation.

In Chapter 5, I pursued the idea that social mobility through educational and professional pursuits was articulated and experienced by my interlocutors in gendered ways. Although such pursuits were not gendered per se, in the sense that both men and women could pursue them, it was also the case that particular professions were skewed for a specific gender. Success and failure were likewise explained in gendered terms. As I have discussed, women were seen as more likely to succeed at school and university, and consequently to pursue professional careers. Men, on the other hand, were described as more likely to be less focussed on their studies, which could lead to failure to become professionals. Moreover, to the extent that men pursued educational and professional paths to middle-classness, such

pursuits were entwined with gendered expectations pertaining to mobility and responsibilities to one's natal family, especially after marriage. Such expectations, along with the historical unfolding of professions, I argued, led to the comparatively weaker ties of the Mahilway brothers to their natal family, as well as their relative absence from accounts of the family's history.

Given that educational and professional pursuits, which were central to the experience of social mobility, involved outmigration from Iloilo, the issue of who would care for parents and other elderly kin was particularly prominent in my fieldsite. Although it was widely recognised that children should care for their elderly parents as a sign of gratitude for the gift of life, as well as the opportunities accorded to them, who exactly within a sibling set ended up bearing such a responsibility was the consequence of gender, age order, and professional trajectories.

Younger, female siblings were more likely to assume such a responsibility, since, as I have mentioned, male siblings were more likely to be away and focussed on their own families. This was especially true if the younger, female sibling's professional career was not flourishing and their other siblings had already left Iloilo for career and marital reasons. In Chapter 6, I attended to the burdens of care, how these were experienced by Tita Amy, and had adverse consequences for her own children. I likewise examined how, in the aftermath of their mother's death, Tita Amy sought, with limited success, to contest the unequal distribution of familial responsibilities between herself and her siblings.

In the final chapter, I expanded my discussion of siblingship through an examination of the relations amongst cousins, and between aunts and uncles and nephews and nieces. I examined how these relations were overshadowed by relations amongst the siblings in the ascending generation. Central here was how children sought to and were expected to stand outside of the conflicts involving their parents and their parents' siblings. In practice, however, such non-involvement was difficult: children and their relations with their cousins and uncles or aunts bore the traces of conflicts that afflicted the parental generation; children's biographies and relations came to be nested within and were implicated with those of their parents. In addition, the inequalities amongst siblings, which were produced and accentuated by the journey of social mobility, came to shape ties in the succeeding generation.

Thus, by presenting an intimate account of a family, as well as their kin and neighbours, I have sought in this thesis to capture broader economic, political, and historical shifts in Iloilo and the rest of the Philippines. Whilst my account is very much rooted in the anthropology of Southeast Asia and the Philippines, it contributes to wider conversations within and outwith social anthropology, including: those on the relational and experiential underpinnings and consequences of becoming middle class; as well as those on kinship relations, particularly their less pleasant aspects, and how these relations move in time and history, absorb broader social transformations, but also set such changes into motion.

Becoming middle class

The stories and lives discussed in this thesis suggest that they experienced the ascent to middle classness partly as a passage where ideals of personhood and relatedness came together. Whilst at times these ideals reinforced one another, there were moments too when these ideals were in opposition. Although narrations of the journey to middle classness often emphasised the sweet victory that came after the hard work required to sustain social mobility, a closer consideration discloses that such an achievement may have entailed ambivalence much more than my interlocutors were willing to admit (Friedman 2014; Long & Moore 2013a).

As I have indicated, the pursuit of middle class success in the educational and professional domains was seen in terms of the redemption of selves—of one's own and those of one's parents and siblings. By becoming educationally and professionally successful, one obtained a kind of personhood that in the past was denied to them and their forebears. Respectability, moral ascendancy, and authority—once limited to landed families—were now within the reach of the upwardly mobile. To gain such rewards, one had to fashion a striving and enduring self that would weather the difficulties of upward mobility. Here, personhood was both a requisite and outcome of becoming middle class (Skeggs 2004a; 2004b; 2011).

At the same time, journeys of social mobility were propelled by relations. Parents sent their children to school and university as a form of bequest, and asserted

their authority to ensure that the children would do well in their studies. Siblings were expected to support one another, and if needed, sacrifice their own aspirations so that their other, usually younger siblings could pursue theirs. This expression of solidarity extended to the next generation, with aunts and uncles helping finance their siblings' children's education. Ties of kinship and patronage likewise ensured access to resources, such as land, but also bureaucratic connections, job opportunities, and other forms of support. As social mobility often entailed geographical mobility, the outmigration of upwardly mobile individuals depended on and even created others' immobility.

As discussed in various parts of this thesis, the achievement of middle-classness did strain relations, including those that underpinned social mobility itself. Educational and professional success accentuated age-based hierarchies amongst siblings, whilst in other cases, success led to the reconfiguration and even inversion of such hierarchies. In some cases, middle-class success meant ruptures in one's ties with one's kin and peers—especially when the upwardly mobile person was perceived as having neglected those ties or as behaving like a snob. Meanwhile, outward migration dovetailed with the pursuit of autonomy in adulthood to attenuate familial ties, most especially in the case of men. This left the bulk of kinship work in the hands of female siblings, some of whom (and even their children) experienced blockages in their trajectories of mobility. Moreover, even when successful individuals sought to nourish ties with their kin, their physical absence from the village posed constraints to such ties. Here, the quest for middle-classness appears to have generated inequalities not just in resources but also responsibilities within families; it too generated resentments and animosities amongst siblings that could only be fully expressed in late adulthood, after the death of parents.

To be middle class, of course, meant differentiating oneself and family from one's betters and inferiors (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]; Lamont 1992). I have already mentioned how my interlocutors often depicted the elite families who used to dominate the local economy as covetous of land but ultimately irresponsible and careless about their family fortune. Neighbours and kin who did not achieve the same appurtenances of middle class life as my more successful friends were depicted as having weaker spirits: unable or perhaps unwilling to endure the difficulties and

make the sacrifices necessary to achieving upward mobility. In contrast, those who deemed themselves successful presented themselves as having the correct attitude to property, as valuing education and professional careers, and as having a proper disposition when it comes to life's challenges. I have likewise suggested that this differentiation could also be seen in generational terms: whilst they saw themselves and their parents as possessing the correct set of attitudes necessary to succeed in life, they perceived the next generation as weaker and less driven.

The distinctions made by the upwardly mobile, although having historical bases, were also informed by elisions. Despite the contrast between the middle class and the old elites, the terms by which middle-class success were defined—university degrees and professional careers—were very much in the mould of the elite. On the other hand, the distinction from the immobile lower classes omitted the fact that material differences—e.g. relatively secure access to land and connections to the elite—were fundamental to journeys of upward mobility.

Siblingship in late adulthood

The understanding of social mobility that I have pursued in this thesis was mainly from the vantage point of siblingship, the central locus and idiom of kinship and personhood in the Philippines and other island Southeast Asian societies (see, for example, Aguilar *et al.* 2009; Cannell 1999; Carsten 1997; S. Errington 1989; McKinley 1981). Moving away from an emphasis on siblingship (and kinship more generally) in terms of solidarity and amity (Fortes 1969; Schneider 1980 [1968]), I have sought to foreground the emotional complexities and ambivalences inherent in such ties (Carsten 2013; Das 2007; 2010; 2015; Peletz 1995; 2001). Having met my main interlocutors in their late adulthood proved to be opportune, as it provided a greater historical depth to sibling ties and gave me scope to attend to less understood aspects of siblingship.

A primary theme that runs through the chapters, as I have already mentioned, is the potential for enmity and estrangement that is intrinsic to siblingship. As I elaborated in Chapter 1, such potential is linguistically encoded in

Hiligaynon and other Philippine languages. For the people of Santa Rosa, this potential was spoken of and imagined primarily in terms of marriage, when siblings shift their attention and support from their natal family to their own families. Although earlier accounts portray affines as potential siblings or brothers- and sisters-in-the-making, the narratives and experiences of the people I worked with point to affines as those who take siblings away from their birth families.

Beyond marriage, but also encompassing it, a more general way through the potential for enmity and estrangement within siblingship was apprehended by those I worked with was through notions of betrayal, theft, ingratitude, and abandonment (Lambek 2011; Leinaweaver 2013). Precisely because of the expectations of solidarity and amity attached to siblingship, when siblings steal from, deceive, or neglect one another, their ties suffer considerably; at times, as we have seen, degraded ties between siblings cast a shadow on their children.

Of course, siblingship, as has been noted previously by other anthropologists, is as much about difference as it is about sameness. As I have noted, central here, at least in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, are age and birth order as constitutive of hierarchies, obligations, and entitlements. At the same time, part of becoming adult is the achievement of autonomy from one's parents and siblings. Marriage in this sense is part of establishing adulthood and personal autonomy. Thus, whilst persons were conceived by my interlocutors as always already siblings, they were also acknowledged as striving for and achieving autonomy over time, especially after marriage, but also after the death of parents. Gender, too, plays an important role here. Although island Southeast Asian societies are noted for the relative symmetry between brothers and sisters (and men and women, more generally), the material I have discussed here does indicate gendered differences in expectations and familial obligations that, in general, place more burdens on women (see S. Errington 1990; A. Ong & Peletz 1995).

For my Ilonggo friends, the ascent to middle-classness accentuated siblingship's potential for difference, enmity, and estrangement, at the same time that such ascent relied on and furthered norms of mutual solidarity within siblingship. I have already pointed out how age hierarchies were entrenched but also challenged by journeys of upward mobility. Due to increased stakes (property, dollar

remittances, debts to be repaid, reputations to be maintained and enhanced) brought about by having attained a middle-class status, conflicts between siblings became more substantial and far-reaching. Meanwhile, as I have noted, labour conditions within and beyond the Philippines led a number of the people of Santa Rosa to pursue professional and marital lives outside of Iloilo, and indeed, overseas. For brothers, in particular, this meant greater scope to escape duties and obligations to their parents and siblings.

Indeed, it is important to point out here that even if siblingship was of crucial importance to my Ilonggo interlocutors, the material that I have covered in this thesis brings to the fore the need to understand siblingship in relation to other ties. Persons are always already embedded in multiple relations (Han 2012; Strathern 2005). This much is clear in the discussion on siblings and marriage. Here, I add that for my friends, siblingship could not be divorced from parenthood. The potential for conflicts amongst siblings was, to a large extent, suppressed as long as one or both parents were still alive. Indeed, good parents were seen as those who bound their children together; a parent's death may lead to the emergence or expression of rifts between siblings. At the same time, although siblings' solidarity with one another was seen as extending to the next generation, and even if cousinship itself was an expanded kind of siblingship, ties amongst cousins and between uncles and aunts and their nieces and nephews were mediated by facts of filiation: a cousin is the child of one's aunt or uncle whilst a niece is the daughter of one's sibling.

The entanglements of siblingship and kinship were not limited to relations amongst humans, however (Das 2010; 2015). Various non-humans, too, figured in these ties. Land and houses are perhaps the most obvious and visible, but so were food, money, and photographs. Religious entities, such as saints and the Divine, also mediated and formed part of sibling and other kinship relations. In their specific ways, these non-humans allowed relations to flourish in some contexts, whilst bringing pressure to and even severing these ties in others.

Memory, history, ethnography, and the anthropologist

A full historical anthropological account of Filipino kinship—including siblingship's relation to filiation and affinity, and how this relation might have transformed over time—and its entanglements with politics, economics, and religion remains to be written and exceeds the scope of this thesis. In my account, however, I have sought to foreground these entanglements and the historical embeddedness of kinship relations.

This brings me to my last set of comments. Most of the ethnographic material that I collected during fieldwork consisted of stories and recounted memories. At the same time, I have included information from documentary and archival sources. In some places, this meant that I was able to directly establish the broader historical context of what the people I worked with experienced and narrated. In others, rather than arriving at what exactly transpired in the past, the combination of ethnographic and historical evidence allowed me to speculate on what could have happened or what people might have thought in the past, and to make connections between seemingly disparate events and domains—that is, to open up interpretive possibilities.

In making sense of the narratives that I elicited and heard, I paid attention to both what my interlocutors said and how they did so. Indeed, the topic itself provided particular challenges. It appears that the narratives they shared with me, especially those when we were only beginning to know one another, reflected the impulse to portray themselves as proper and successful middle-class individuals and families. There too was a reluctance in the beginning to speak of the animosities that saturated kinship ties.

As I have indicated in various parts of this thesis, spending time with the people of Santa Rosa permitted me to come to terms with how stories of social mobility were very much part of their self-presentation as members of the middle class, and how such stories conformed to the norm of kinship amity and solidarity. Thus, the deployment of a narrative aesthetic that emphasised perseverance, endurance, suffering, and sacrifice. At the same time, by spending time with them, I was able to attend to the excluded and suppressed stories, as well as the alternative narratives that highlighted the ambivalences both of siblingship (or kinship more generally) and upward mobility.

Here I wish to emphasise that the very act of telling these alternative narratives and excluded stories formed part of the conflicts that beset my Ilonggo friends. To narrate these accounts was to demolish a sibling's grandiose claims, for instance. At the same time, such accounts bore testament to the intimate forms of knowledge that are at the heart of siblingship and kinship. Who else is in a better position to reveal a brother's secret or a sister's failure than a sibling?

I have thus found that the anthropologist who is interested in providing a more complex picture of siblingship and social mobility needs to listen intently, not just to what is being said, but also to what is being left out; to claims of success and joy, but also to subtle hints as well as revelations of discord and misery. To do so, the anthropologist enacts and participates in the very intimacy and distance that lie at the heart of kinship.

A year after Lola Ising's death

In December 2015, in the middle of writing this thesis, I returned to Santa Rosa to participate in the *bungkag lalaw*, the gathering that marked the passing of one year after Lola Ising's death. Months before the event, Tita Monica called me from New York to insist that I should be present. Tita Amy, too, and most especially her son Echo, called and sent messages from Iloilo to make sure that I would come. Although the gathering was scheduled for early January, I decided to go to Iloilo early and spend Christmas and New Year with the Mahilways.

For the *bungkag lalaw*, most of the Mahilway siblings, spouses in tow, went home to Santa Rosa, as did Tita Monica from New York, Tito Benjie from Cebu, and Tita Remy and Tita Angeles from Negros. Present too, of course, were the siblings who resided in Santa Rosa: Tita Mila, Tita Dolor, and Tita Amy. In fact, Tita Amy was once again in charge of the food. She had raised two pigs to be slaughtered—one each for the New Year's Eve celebration and the *bungkag lalaw*. With the help of her sons and a nephew, and a few neighbours she cooked the dishes for both occasions.

Some of my classificatory cousins also went home for the gathering, such as Tita Angeles's son who helped with the cooking. So too did Tito Benjie's daughter, who had been working in Canada, and son, who had been based in Australia. Tita Mila's daughters and her son-in-law who lived with her likewise came. Patrick, too, surprised his aunts and uncle by arriving unannounced from Manila a couple of days before the occasion. In addition, a considerable number of the siblings' cousins and other relatives, as well as neighbours and other villagers came to mark the occasion.

There were absences, too. Several of my cousins could not come home because of their work abroad. Tita Amy's daughter, Jenny, for instance, was unable to take leave from her nursing job with the NHS, as the Home Office had not released her permanent residency papers. Meanwhile, Tito Celso continued to be estranged from his siblings. Tita Olive, who her siblings found out, went home to Iloilo from the US for the holidays, was absent, and so were her husband and their children.

Unlike in the older days, when, I was told, the *bungkag lalaw* included a religious ritual involving the clothes of the deceased (see Jocano 1983: 216-17), Lola Ising's entailed a simple prayer led by Tita Mila, followed by a meal. Weeks earlier, during the date of Lola Ising's death anniversary, Tita Amy sponsored a mass in her mother's name. The *bungkag lalaw* itself appeared to have very few religious associations; instead, it was largely a centripetal kinship event.

At around ten in the evening, upon Echo's prodding, I led my classificatory cousins in leaving the *bungkag lalaw*. Mark, Echo's brother, agreed to drive us to the city's new business district. Their parent, uncles, and aunts, were amused, but also slightly concerned, that 'the youngsters,' as they called us, were going out at what they considered as a late hour. This prompted my mostly younger cousins to look at me. Taking the hint, I told Tita Monica and my other aunts and uncles that we would not be long and we would just have coffee. To our relief, our elders consented. They asked Mark to drive carefully. Laughing and excited, we all walked to the car.

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